



The Shepherd's Play

Music by Richard Shephard

Story and Libretto by Mark Schweizer

To complete this trilogy, Dr. Shephard has fashioned an entr'acte to be performed between St. Nicholas and Good King Wenceslas (although this little gem can be performed on its own.) For four male soloists (TTBB), string quartet (or orchestra), flute and offstage chorus, this dramatic piece is approximately 8 minutes in length.

Synopsis

Three of the shepherds are returning from Bethlem and encounter a fourth who questions them about what they saw. As they tell their story and try in vain to mimic the angel's song they heard on the hillside, once again the heavenly chorus breaks into song. The fourth shepherd is determined to take his gift to the child as well, but as he departs, he is told by the departing trio; "Take whatever gift you will, but he has no need of it. You must give him the gift he desires most. You must give him your heart."

The Shepherd's Play - A Pastorale

Cast

Shepherd 1 (Tenor)
 Shepherd 2 Baritone
 Shepherd 3 Baritone
 Shepherd 4 (Tenor)

A shepherd is sitting on the hillside. His companions have deserted him. The three wayward shepherds (comic characters - bumbling and very rustic) return from the manger talking to themselves about what they have seen.

Shepherd 4: O you wicked shepherds. You've left me by myself to watch the sheep. I came late to the hillside and found the sheep left by themselves on the slope where a wolf or a lion could devour them."

Shepherd 1: We have seen wondrous things this night. Angels singing in the skies.

Shepherd 4: You heard the angels sing?

All: We did, we surely did!

Shepherd 2: And they told us 'Go even unto Bethlehem and see this babe who is Savior of the world.'

Shepherd 3: So we took gifts to the child in the manger.

Shepherd 1: I brought him a bell of tin.

Shepherd 2: I brought a spoon of bone that could hold almost forty peas

Shepherd 3: I brought a rattle made of shells to the child.

Shepherd 4: The angels told this to you?

All: They did, they surely did!

Shepherd 4: And these angels, what was their song? Can you notremember it?

All: We can, we surely can!

(lots of throat clearing and operatic posturing)

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Chorus: Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Go even unto Bethlehem and see this sight which has been made known to you. Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherd 4: You have all gone to Bethlehem. I must go also. And for a gift, I will give him this blanket.

Shepherd 3: My friend, give him whatever gift you will, but he has no need of it.

Shepherd 1: When you see him, you must give him the gift he desires.

All: You must give him your heart.

Shepherds exit as angels reprise:

Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.