

HOW GREAT OUR
JOY!



A CHRISTMAS MUSICAL

by Stan Pethel

Orchestrations by Stan Pethel

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HOW GREAT OUR JOY

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PREFACE

Beginning with the first Sunday in December each year, it is common to find Christian churches everywhere presenting special Christmas programs. We have come to call these Christmas cantatas or Christmas musicals.

Historically, this practice is centuries old, with the first recorded presentation being that of St. Francis of Assisi performing the Midnight Mass in the small Italian village of Greccio on Christmas Eve in the year 1223. St. Francis presented this Midnight Mass in front of a live nativity scene or creche as they are often called.

In succeeding years the term Nativity Play was generally applied to such observances and music played an important role.

Such was the case in a Nativity Play from the 1500's when the German carol, *While by the Sheep We Watched*, was first performed. The composer/lyricist's name has long been unknown so it is now attributed to one of my favorites, the prolific and versatile composer known as Anonymous.

This carol first appeared in print in 1895 in octavo form arranged by the German conductor, composer, and arranger, Hugo Jüngst. It has also been called the "echo carol."

Since that time the carol we now know as *How Great Our Joy* has become a staple in music of the Advent/Christmas season. The theme is joy.

Joy and happiness are not the same for believers. We can have eternal joy in Christ, while happiness can be a temporal concept.

As we experience this musical, let us join in celebrating that same joy that was celebrated by St. Francis of Assisi centuries ago, and continues now and for years to come, based on the gift of Heaven's Love.

Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

HOW GREAT OUR JOY

Arranged by
STAN PETHEL

1 $\frac{1}{24}$ **Brightly** (♩ = ca. 104)

ACCOMP. *f*

3 **SOPRANO / ALTO** *f* **5** While by the sheep, we

TENOR / BASS *f* **5**

6 watched at night, glad tid-ings brought an an - gel bright. How

* Tune: JÜNGST, traditional German melody
Words: traditional German carol

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9 11
f
 great our joy! Joy, joy, joy!
f

11
p *f*

12 *f*
 Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!
f

p *f*

15 17
mf
 There shall be born, so

17
mf

he did say, How

mf

in Beth-le-hem, a child to - day.

great our joy! Joy, joy, joy!

f

f

p *f*

25

f

Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!

f

25

p *f*

27

Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!

dim.

30

Shep-herds, on the hill - side,

mp

2/25

33

hear the an - gels sing: "Glo - ry, hon - or, prais - es

mp

to this heav'n - ly King." Sing we No - el. With

joy, we sing No - el! Sing we now of Christ - mas. Sing we all No -

el! Shep - herds, in the

43

field a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your flocks by night,

46

God with us is now re - sid - ing. Yon - der shines the

49

in - fant light. Come and wor - ship. Come and wor - ship.

50

Wor - ship Christ, the new - born King. Wor - ship Christ, the



new - born King. How great our joy!

Great our joy! Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!

61

63

Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high! Praise we the Lord in

Musical notation for the vocal line, measures 61-63. The melody is in a minor key with a flat signature. It features a series of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests. The lyrics are: "Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high! Praise we the Lord in".

Musical notation for the piano accompaniment, measures 61-63. The piano part consists of chords and moving lines in both hands, supporting the vocal melody.

64

63

heav'n on high! How great

Musical notation for the vocal line, measures 64-66. The lyrics are: "heav'n on high! How great". The melody continues with a few more notes and rests.

Musical notation for the piano accompaniment, measures 64-66. The piano part continues with chords and moving lines.

67

molto rit.

our joy!

Musical notation for the vocal line, measures 67-69. The lyrics are: "our joy!". The melody is held in long notes. Dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo). The tempo marking is *molto rit.* (molto ritardando).

Musical notation for the piano accompaniment, measures 67-69. The piano part features chords and moving lines, with dynamics including *ff* and *molto rit.*

Narrator:

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. (*Luke 2:8*)

I'm sure you have heard that verse before. My name is Asher. I was just a 12 year old boy at the time, but I was one of those shepherds. I can tell you that account is true. From that time on, I was aware of the birth of Jesus, and the many important events of his life.

Though I was aware of the prophecy of the coming of the Christ Child, it was when I was a much older man that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians confirming the Old Testament, (*music begins*) "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman." (*Galatians 4:4*)

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME

Based on
Galatians 4:4

Words and Music by
STAN PETHEL

5/28 Expressively (♩ = ca. 76)

ACCOMP. *mp*

4 SOPRANO / ALTO *mp*
TENOR / BASS

Proph-ets through the a - ges - told a - bout His birth. A

5

7 vir - gin will con - ceive, they said, and God will come to earth.

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9

mp

He shall know not e - vil, ___ choos-ing what is right.

11

mf

Heav-en's joy, He brings us, as dark-ness be-comes light. In the

mf

14

full-ness of time, He came. ___ With the world on His mind, He came..

14

mf

17

With His heart filled with love _____ from the

19

Fa-ther a - bove, in the full-ness of time, _____ He came..

22 6
29

Then one bore a wit - ness_

24

25

of this light to come, He told how Je - sus Christ would be — re -

27

28

ject-ed by His own. — Who re-ceive, the Sons of God are they;

But those who re-ceive Him, — Sons of God are they;

30

know-ing Christ the Sav-ior, the Life, the Truth, the Way. In the

mf

mf

33

full-ness of time, He came. With the world on His mind, He came...

33

mf

36

With His heart filled with love from the Fa-ther a - bove, in the

39

full-ness of time, He came.

mp 7/30

mp

42

43

f

In the full - ness of time, — He came. —

f

Musical notation for measures 42-43, vocal line. The key signature changes from one sharp (F#) to three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab). The melody starts with a whole rest in measure 42, followed by a half note G4 in measure 43. The lyrics are "In the full - ness of time, — He came. —".

43

f

Musical notation for measures 42-43, piano accompaniment. The right hand plays chords and moving lines, while the left hand provides a steady bass line. The dynamic is marked *f*.

44

With the world on His mind, He came. — With His

Musical notation for measures 44-45, vocal line. The melody continues with a half note G4 in measure 44 and a half note A4 in measure 45. The lyrics are "With the world on His mind, He came. — With His".

Musical notation for measures 44-45, piano accompaniment. The piano continues with chords and moving lines, supporting the vocal melody.

47

heart filled with love — from the Fa - ther a - bove, — in the

Musical notation for measures 47-48, vocal line. The melody continues with a half note G4 in measure 47 and a half note A4 in measure 48. The lyrics are "heart filled with love — from the Fa - ther a - bove, — in the".

Musical notation for measures 47-48, piano accompaniment. The piano continues with chords and moving lines, supporting the vocal melody.

49

mp

full-ness of time,

He came.

mp

mp

52

53

In the full - ness of time, He came.

53

56

p

rit.

He

came.

p

p

rit.

Narrator:

You have also heard this passage from the scripture: “And the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid.” (*Luke 2:9*)

I can tell you that we were “sore afraid.” In fact we were terrified! The brightness of the “glory of the Lord” was unbelievable. Seeing Jesus’ ministry when He was grown was amazing. (*music begins*) As He told those around Him, when He healed a blind man, “I am the Light of the world.” (*John 9:5*)

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BRINGER OF LIGHT

Arranged by
STAN PETHEL

$\frac{8}{31}$ Flowingly (♩ = ca. 52)

ACCOMP. *mf*

4 SOPRANO / ALTO **mf*

What

7

Child is this who laid to rest, on Mar - y's lap is

* Tune: GREENSLEVES, traditioanl English melody
Words: William C. Dix, 1827-1898

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10

sleep - ing;

TENOR / BASS *mf*

whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet, while

13

This, — this is

shep - herds watch — are keep - ing?

15 *f*

16

Christ the King, — whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing.

19

Haste, haste, to bring Him laud, the Babe, the Son of

22

Mar - y; the Babe, the Son of Mar - y;

25

It came up - on the

* Tune: CAROL, Richard Storrs Willis, 1819-1900
 Words: Edmund H. Sears, 1810-1876

28

mid - night clear, that joy - ous song_ of old; _____ from

31

an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps_ of

34

gold. _____ "Peace on the earth, good will to men, from

37

heav'n's all gra - cious King." _____ The world in sol - emn

40

still - ness lay, to hear the an - gels sing.

43

44 10
33 * *mp*

The *mp*

44 *mp*

* Tune: THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, Philip P. Bliss, 1838-1876
 Words: Philip P. Bliss, alt. Stan Pethel

46

whole world was lost in the dark-ness of sin. The bring-er of light is

49

Je - sus. Like sun-shine at noon-day, His glo - ry shines in. The

52

bring-er of light is Je - sus. Come share the joy, now

55

down from a - bove. Come fill your heart with heav-en - ly love.

58

Share in the hope and peace for the world. The bring-er of light is

61

Je - sus. The bring-er of light

64

is Je - sus, the

68 *rit.*

Light of the world.

rit. *mp*

Narrator:

The angel told us, “This shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” (*Luke 2:12b*) Then the sky exploded with more angels than we could count; their message: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to all.”

It was quite a shock! When all the angels were gone I think it was my friend Baruch who said, “We need to go see this for ourselves.” So the whole group of us went to Bethlehem and sure enough there it was, just as the angel had said. (*music begins*) We saw Mary quietly watching over the newborn Baby.

HEAVEN'S LOVE

Words and Music by
STAN PETHEL

11/34 Expressively (♩ = ca. 76) 8^{va}-----

ACCOMP.

4 SOLO (opt. S.A. unis.) 5 *p*

Heav-en's love came to earth as a Child, Heav-en's

(8^{va})-----

7

love; and He knew all the while, He has come, our

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10

mp

sac - ri - fice to be, that the world would see. Heav-en's

13

joy, in a sta - ble so small, bring - ing grace and sal -

16

va - tion to all. He has come, our sac - ri - fice to be, Je - sus

19 12
35

(end solo) **mf**

21

is heav-en's love, Love un-bound - ed,

mf

21

22

love di-vine, love come down for hu - man-kind.

25

In this Child of low-ly birth, Heav-en's joy comes to

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13
36

28

30

earth. Heav - en's love came to

Heav-en's love came to

30

31

earth as a Child, Heav-en's love; and He knew all the while, He has

earth as a Child, Heav-en's love; and He knew all the while, He has

34

come, our sac - ri - fice to be, that the world would

come, our sac - ri - fice to be, that the world would

37

38

see. Heav-en's joy, in a sta - ble so small,

see. Heav-en's joy, in a sta - ble so small, bring-ing

38

bring-ing grace and sal - va - tion to all. He has come, our

40

grace and sal - va - tion to all. He has come, our

sac - ri - fice to be, Je - sus is heav-en's love,

sac - ri - fice to be, Je - sus is heav-en's love,

43

sac - ri - fice to be, Je - sus is heav-en's love,

sac - ri - fice to be, Je - sus is heav-en's love,

sac - ri - fice to be, Je - sus is heav-en's love,

46

heav - en's Love.

p *rit.*

p *rit.*

Narrator:

It was the talk of the town of Bethlehem for quite some time. Joseph, Mary, and the Christ Child, (they named Him Jesus) settled in Bethlehem. They found a nice house to live in. It was quite a surprise to everyone when the wise men, as they came to be known, arrived. We were all duly impressed by their grand appearance.

Bearing gifts they came, found the Child, fell down, and worshiped Him. It seems that in the Eastern land of their origin, they had seen the great star that has shone over Bethlehem (*music begins*) since the birth and followed it to find the the Christ Child, the Gift of Heaven.

IN THE MIDNIGHT SKY

Words and Music by
STAN PETHEL

14/37 Easy tempo (♩ = ca. 124)

ACCOMP. *mf*

4 SOPRANO / ALTO *mf*
TENOR / BASS *mf*

In the

7

mid-night sky, a star, shin - ing

7

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10

bright; in the mid-night sky, _____ on

13

this ho - ly night; tell - ing all the world _____

16

of a Sav - ior's _____ birth, while the

19

an - gel choir - is sing - ing in the mid - night

22

15/38

sky, Glo - ry from on high, _____

Glo - ry

25

the an - gels - did say, and good -

from on high, _____

will to all _____ on this sa - cred
and good - will to all

This system contains three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. It contains the lyrics "will to all _____ on this sa - cred". The middle staff is the bass line in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, containing the lyrics "and good - will to all". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

31 day; tell - ing all the world _____ of a
32

This system contains three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature. It contains the lyrics "day; tell - ing all the world _____ of a". A measure number box containing the number "32" is positioned above the staff. The middle staff is the bass line in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. A measure number box containing the number "32" is positioned above the staff. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature. The piano part continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

34 Sav - ior's _____ birth, while the an - gel choir is

This system contains three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature. It contains the lyrics "Sav - ior's _____ birth, while the an - gel choir is". The middle staff is the bass line in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature. The piano part continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

37

16/39

sing - ing in the mid - night sky.

40

They had jour - neyed far, bear - ing

40

They had jour - neyed far,

43

gifts they would give the Child; fol - low - ing a star,

fol - low - ing a

46

— with His moth - er meek_ and mild. Bow-ing
star,

49

down they came_ in wor - ship, God with us Em - man - u -

49

52

el. Join in praise with all_ cre - a - tion, and the

55

17/40

mid - night sky. In the

f

SOPRANO DESCANT

58

S

f

In the mid - night sky, a star was shin - ing,

mid-night sky, a star, shin - ing

f

in the mid-night sky,

58

61

S

shin - ing bright;_ in the mid - night sky, on

bright; in the mid-night sky, on

in the mid-night sky, _

64

S

this ho - ly night;_

this ho - ly night; tell - ing all the world

66

66

67

of a Sav - ior's birth, while the

70

an - gel choir is sing - ing in the mid - night

73

sky, while the an - gel choir is sing - ing in the

77

mid - night sky.

mf

mf

mf

Narrator:

Many years later, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman Church ...the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Romans 6:23*) I'm reminded of that truth each time I think about that night on that hillside.

That gift arrived at the little town of Bethlehem, and I was there to see it, first hand.

I've never been the same since that day the angel came and announced this marvelous event, on that hillside long ago. I join with all believers (*music begins*) in celebrating the Bringer of light and the Giver of life.

THIS GIFT OF GOD

45

Arranged by
STAN PETHEL

18/41

Brightly (♩ = ca. 104)

ACCOMP.

3 SOPRANO / ALTO

TENOR / BASS

* *f*

There shall the Child lie

5

6

in a stall; this Child, who will re - deem us — all. How

* Tune: JÜNGST, traditional German melody
Words: traditional German carol

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9

great our joy! Joy, joy, joy!

11 *f*

11 *f*

p *f*

12

Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!

f *f*

p *f*

15

This gift of God, we'll

17 *mf*

17 *mf*

18

cher - ish well, How

mf

that ev - er joy our hearts shall fill.

21

great our joy! Joy, joy, joy!

f

f

p *f*

24

25

f

Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!

f

25

p *f*

27

Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high, on

30

high! To God be the glo - ry great

35

things He has done. Re - demp-tion has come in the birth of His

40

Son; dis - pel - ling the dark - ness, the Bring-er of Light, the

45

Hope of the earth and the Giv - er of life. Sing No-

50

el! Sing no - el! Let the high heav - en ring. Sing no - el! Sing no-

el! Born our Sav - ior and King. The great - est of

gifts has come down from a - bove; the gift of sal - va - tion and

heav - en - ly love. How

67

great our joy! Joy, joy, joy!

70

71

How great our

71

73

ff rit.

joy! How great our joy!

ff rit.

Narrator:

I was 12 years older than Jesus. I was there when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and I followed his life and ministry closely. I became a believer as I realized that Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us.

I join with you and all believers (*music begins*) as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child and share the joy He brings.

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SHARE THE JOY - BENEDICTION

Words and Music by
STAN PETHEL

22/45 Prayerfully (♩ = ca. 80)

ACCOMP. *p* *mp*

4 SOPRANO / ALTO *mp* 5

We have come, like shep-herds long a - go, seek-ing
come, as wise men from a - far, on a

TENOR / BASS *mp*

5

7

Christ, that all the world may know of God's love that came to earth that
quest, while fol-low - ing a star; point - ing to the place of ho - ly

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10

1

night, bring-ing truth, bring-ing light. We have
birth, bring-ing

23
46

13

2

mf 15

life to all the earth. As we go, let Je - sus fill each

mf

2

15

mf

16

heart. As we go, Lord, fill our in-most part. May Your

19

joy and peace be-gin to grow, so that all the world may

22

know, so that all the world may know. *mp*

23 *mp*

25

rit. *p*

rit. *p* *pp*



Dr. Stan Pethel is Professor Music Emeritus at Berry College near Rome, Georgia. He served on the music faculty there from 1973 until his retirement in 2016 serving as a Fine Arts department chair from 1994 to 2013. He holds Bachelor of Music and Master of Fine Arts degrees from the University of Georgia and a Doctorate of Musical Arts degree from the University of Kentucky. Dr. Pethel taught music theory, music education, composition and arranging, world music, and low brass lessons.

He is a widely published composer and arranger with over 1,400 works in print from twenty eight different publishers. His writing includes works for choir, piano, organ/piano duet, symphonic band, jazz ensemble, orchestra, handbells, solo instrument and piano, and various chamber music ensembles. He is a regular recipient of the ASCAP Standard Award.

He is married to Jo Ann Pethel, a pianist and music educator. They have three children and six grandchildren