

## **NOEL! BORN IS THE KING!**

Rehearsal Notes:

**Carol Medley** – what is more fun at Christmas than singing carols! As the choir, your job is to lead in this singing, so your energetic voices and smiling faces will be on full display. These three carols should be familiar to your church, and the arrangement does not present any difficult passages for rehearsal. So, what's left? It is your heart. Give the Lord your best worship as you lead your congregation.

**God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen** – this familiar Christmas song finds new life with the twist that Meredith Andrews adds. She has created a fun-to-sing new chorus, so I would spend your rehearsal time mostly on this chorus. The verse portion is a simple statement of the original carol. In the bridge, beginning at ms. 49, start with a hushed sound then build back to full strength for the final chorus at ms. 81. Each section of the bridge adds some new voice parts.

**Mary Was The First One** – the Gaither Vocal Band is a fun group to hear, and their take on this gospel song will be fun for your choir, as well. The extra treat goes to the bass section as they sing alone “to carry” in ms. 10-11 and similar spots. Spend some extra time on the “gospel tuning” needed for these 7<sup>th</sup> chords...especially working on the alto and tenor parts. Singing a cappella will reveal if the tuning is on target. There is a great solo spot beginning in ms. 26...it could optionally be done by a choir section, but a solo is preferred...and the soloist should add some extra “feeling” to the passage.

**Noel** – this is one of the great new contemporary Christmas songs of our day. It should be filled with emotion and mystery as the ladies begin to sing. Notice the mp dynamic marking...in this case, it does mean to sing softly, but you should add “hushed intensity” to your choir's sound. Then building to the chorus in ms. 18...backing down again for vs. 2. The build-up is even more dramatic to the next chorus, adding some new choir parts. Finally, for the last chorus, the parts change one last time. Be sure to create a triumphant sound as you proclaim our Messiah's birth...come and see what God has done!

**O Holy Night** – a Christmas standard every year, for sure! There is nothing tricky about the arrangement, so the rehearsal focus should be on dynamic contrast. Tender passages, leading to heroic passages at the end will make this favorite song lift to the heavens. Work on long, connected phrases to make these precious words touch the heart.

**The First Noel** – this is perhaps one of the greatest lyrics in our Christmas carol repertoire. “And with His blood mankind has bought” stands at the top of the list of theological truths at Christmas time. It is also a familiar song, one which your choir and congregation can sing easily. The rehearsal time for the choir should focus on the fanfare opening and closing statements. I encourage you to practice these a cappella to make sure all parts are solid.

**The King Of Who I Am** – a beautiful song of testimony, and I suggest using a solo at the top to enhance the personal nature of the lyrics. It is a familiar song, but the slow contemporary rhythms of the chorus need your attention...again, a cappella singing will reveal how “together” your choir is singing these passages. With the final chorus, beginning in ms. 32, let your volume and energy grow to make this final statement of praise. Then to conclude, the arrangement asks you to bring it back down, to a personal expression of worship.

Devotionals:

### **1. The First Noel**

The prophet Isaiah had a special relationship with God judging from the way the prophet received special revelation about the coming Messiah. Isaiah, in chapters 9 and 11, describes some of the kingly attributes of this Promised One. Read these chapters and make a list of those characteristics that imply that Jesus would be is the King of kings.

Though it is hard to grasp the concepts of a sovereign king over loyal subjects, pray that God will reveal to you how to respond to Him in full surrender.

### **2. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen w/ He has come to us**

Comfort and joy. These are the familiar words in this carol. Again, Isaiah speaks to this concept when prophesying about the coming of our Savior.

Read the 40<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah. You'll recognize most of this as part of the prophetic narrative regarding the Messiah.

Later on, Paul writes about how God through Christ is our comfort. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. This not only describes the comfort that Jesus brings, but how we then can use the Spirit of God to comfort others.

Pray that God will not only bring you comfort and joy this season, but that He will show you how to display these gifts to others.

### **3. Mary Was the First One**

This song is a bit of a play on words, but read the story about Mary's encounter with Gabriel found in Luke 1:26-38. Imagine what the mother of our Lord must have been feeling at this news! Read verses 37-38 again and notice the bold statement that the angel speaks. Then notice Mary's response to that statement.

Ask God to reveal His plan for you even if you, at first, declare it impossible. Then give yourself to Him without hesitation.

### **4. Carol Medley**

Angels played big parts in preparing the world for the coming of the Messiah. Read Matthew 1: 18-25. Joseph had a dream encounter with an angel. What did the angel tell Joseph in verse 20? Now look at Luke 2: 8-15. What did the angel tell the shepherds when it first appeared? Verse 10 echoes the message God brought to Joseph: fear not!

What do you fear? Are your fears sometimes unfounded? Are they paralyzing? How do you combat your fears?

Ask God to allow you to live without debilitating fears, but to dwell in His peace.

## **5. Noel**

The word “noel” isn’t found in the Bible. But in early centuries after Christ was born it became a sort of greeting at the celebration of the nativity.

The song lyrics speak to some of the most beautiful and confounding mysteries of the coming of Jesus. Love incarnate is one of the first words in the song. Read from the Gospel of John, chapter 1, the first 14 verses. John understood the idea of God becoming flesh and living among us.

Pray that God will reveal Himself in a special way to you this season. After all, He is Emmanuel—God with us.

## **6. O Holy Night**

Read Exodus 3:5, Habakkuk 2:20, Matthew 6:9, 1 Peter 1:15. From these passages, what would be an accurate definition of the word “holy.” Based on your definition, why do you think this hymn writer described a particular night as holy?

Look at the lyrics of this song and all the references it has to the birth. Then, as the song invites, fall on your knees and thank the Holy One for sending His Son—and for allowing you to be a part of His plan.

## **7. The King of Who I Am**

This lyric reminds us that Jesus is not only the King of Israel, but the ruler of our hearts.

Read Colossians 3:15-16. The word “rule” in the 15<sup>th</sup> verse, I am told, is the same word used by sports officials when they call balls and strikes, signal a touchdown, or call a penalty. Letting God rule is more than acknowledging Him as king, it is surrendering to the play-by-play, daily decisions that we face.

Pray (without ceasing—as 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says) that every decision you make is in step with the Lord’s plan.