David Cameron

THE GIFT OF LIGHT

AN ADVENT CANTATA

for

S.A.T.B. SOLI,
CHORUS, AND PIANO
The Gift of Light

Composer’s note

*The Gift of Light* was commissioned by the Pro Arte Society of Kingston. The text is from three sources: three of the traditional Advent antiphons (*O Sapientia, O Radix Jesse, and O Oriens*); the English scholar and ecclesiastic Alcuin, or Albinus, who served at the court of Charlemagne; and from the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. The translations from St. John are a composite, drawn mainly from the Nen English Bible and the Authorised Version, with elements here and there from other translations.

Those who know my short mass *Missa Bicinia* will recognize extensive allusions to its Kyrie. In part these indicate that no better setting of these words occurred to me when I was writing this cantata, but they have another purpose as well. When Shelagh Leach, Librarian of the Pro Arte Singers, first spoke to me about this cantata, she said kind things about the *Missa Bicinia*. The use of material from that mass is therefore meant as a compliment to Shelagh, who is a longtime and much valued friend and colleague.

Myths of light and darkness hold a deep place in the human soul. For the orthodox Christian they may be transfigured by their association with the incarnation, but for all of us they still retain some of the feeling of Tolkien’s work: the darkness is inhabited by horrors not quite unimaginable, and the splendour of light excels the sun.

Music’s province is really not philosophy, but feeling; and these ancient writers, however serious their final ends, valued dramatic imagery for its power to engage the feelings of the reader. They write of eternal things not just piously or cerebrally, but with passion, and reverence, and a rolling grandeur of language that can almost be tasted. I hope that the performance of this piece can capture some of their vividness; and with it, the energy and fun of good storytelling.

David Cameron

Kingston, November 1986.

With this re-engraving and editing, *The Gift of Light* is presented once again. I have made very few changes, merely some adjustment to phrase marks, and a very few alterations to expressive directions. It may need to be said, as Brian Jackson remarked when he was preparing the first performance in 1986, that despite its occasional post-Hindemithian dissonance, this is a romantic work. It should be sung and played with a strong sense of vocal line and pianistic and choral drama.

I could not write this music in 2015; too many things have changed in how we listen and perform. But it does, I think, present an authentic vision of these ancient texts, from the musician I was thirty years ago. And in it I celebrate the memory of Shelagh Leach, whose kind words inspired it.

David Cameron, February 2015
The Gift of Light

(Gradually gaining energy)

Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison.

(Gaining energy)

Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison.

(Gradually gaining energy)

Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison, Kyrielleison.
whose reach is boundless,
whose reach is boundless, who orders all things
whose reach is boundless, who orders all things

who orders all things mightily,
who orders mightily, mightily, mightily

mightily, mightily, mightily
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might - i - ly, and with sweet -
might - i - ly and sweet.
Might - i - ly and with sweet -

a tempo

a tempo

Might - i - ly and with sweet -

a tempo

Might - i - ly and with sweet -

p subito

mp


Come and teach us the way of
Come and teach us the way of

più mosso

più mosso

Come and teach us the way of

Ky - ri - ness.

Ky - ri - ness.

Ky - ri - ness.

Come and teach us the way of

Come and teach us the way of
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Kyrie eleison.

Way of prudence; come and deliver us, come, come and deliver us.

Come and deliver us, come, come and deliver us.
us, deliver us, and
de-liv-er us and
us, de-liv-er us.
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and the Word was with God, and the Word

was God. (yield)

cresc. poco a poco

dim.

all things were made,

through Him without Him
no thing was made that has been made:

Him was life, and the life was the light of men:

And the light was the light of men: and the light

And the light shines on, and the light shines on,

And the light shines on in the

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The Gift of Light

shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has never mastered it.

Brightness of the darkness has never mastered it.

BASSES (Bass I only)

Brightness of the darkness has never mastered it.

(a tempo)
light eternal,
and Sun of righteousness,
light eternal, and Sun of righteousness,
light, light eternal and Sun of righteousness,
light eternal, and Sun of righteousness,
light eternal, and Sun of righteousness.

Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness, come; come and enlighten them that sit in darkness.

Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness.
ligh ten them that sit in dark ness, and in the
sit in dark ness, in dark ness,
come and en ligh ten tham that sit in dark ness, and in the
them that sit, that sit in dark ness,

rall.

sha dow of death.

and in the sha dow of death. TENOR SOLO

sha dow of death. There was a man sent from God whose name was BASS SOLO

and in the sha dow of death.

rall.
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John. but he was sent to bear witness to the light,

He was not that light, but he was sent, but he was sent to bear wit -

SOPRANO SOLO 130

ALTO/MEZZO SOLO

mf the true light which en-lights all of us was e-ven then

to the light;  

mf the true light was

ness to the light, mf the true light which en-lights us was
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He was in the world, coming into the world.

He was in the world, was coming to the world.

even then coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was

even then coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was

and the world was made by Him,

and the world was made by Him, Kyrielleison,

made by Him.
world knew Him not!

He came unto his own,

Kyrie eleison, unto his own, His own received Him not!

Kyrie eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

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20 The Gift of Light

God; to all who received him gave he power to become the children of God.

But to all who received him gave he power, to become the children of God.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, made God; and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, made
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flesh, and dwelt among us, and we be held His glory,

flesh and dwelt among us, His glory, and we be-held his glo-

flesh and dwelt among us, and we be-held his glory, glo-

Glo-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____-____

Glo ry as of the only
be-got-ten of the Fa-ther, full of grace and truth.

got-ten of the Fa-ther, full of grace, grace and truth.

be-got-ten of the Fa-ther, full of grace, grace and truth.

E-ter-nal Fa-ther of

E-ter-nal Fa-ther of

E-ter-nal Fa-ther of

con moto
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light, shine thou in our hearts!

Eternal Goodness, deliver us,

Eternal Goodness, deliver us,
Liver us from all that is evil.

Liver us from all that is evil.

Liver us from all that is evil.

us from all that is evil.

Meno mosso (c. 76 – )

p (background)

cresc.

Wis dom, coming

Wis dom, coming

Wis dom, coming

O Wis dom,
forth from the mouth of the Most High! Wisdom, whose reach is boundless,
com-ing forth from the Most High! Wisdom, whose reach is boundless,
com-ing forth from the Most High! Wisdom, whose reach is boundless,

dispers e our fool-ish dark ness, our fool-ish dark ness.

disper se our fool-ish dark ness, our fool-ish dark ness.
disper se our fool-ish dark ness, our fool-ish dark ness.

disper se our fool-ish dark ness, our fool-ish dark ness.

High! Wis-dom,
High! Wis-dom,
High! Wis-dom,

whose reach is boundless,
whose reach is boundless,
whose reach is boundless,
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Gently ($d = c. 72$)


Gently ($d = c. 72$)

E-ter-nal com-pas-sion, E-ter-nal com-

195 dim. poco a poco . . .

Tempo primo

... do thou have mer-cy up-on our weak-ness-es.

... do thou have mer-cy up-on our weak-ness-es.

... do thou have mer-cy up-on our weak-ness-es.

pas-sion, have mer-cy up-on our weak-nesses.
The Gift of Light
The Gift of Light

Kyrie eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

pp possibile laissez vibrer