

SING GLORIA

Optional Concert Host Audience Dialogue

By
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(For anyone considering performing SING GLORIA in its entirety, the following concert script is offered as a performance supplement. Because SING GLORIA is a worship concert, one performance option is to present the work in a true concert format, a single host providing a running dialogue with the audience between each musical number. The dialogue is structured to set up each song individually and often shares the story behind the song. This script is meant to serve as a suggestion only – your host should add personal ideas, thoughts, and observations [as well as put it into his/her own words] to best communicate with your particular church and community.)

I. GLORIA

(The end of “Gloria” should segue directly [after applause] to “Spirit of the Season.”)

II. SPIRIT OF THE SEASON

HOST: Merry Christmas, and may the spirit of the season be yours tonight and throughout the year! We are so pleased you’ve chosen to join us in this place and celebrate the birth of God’s only Son. It is a time of wonder, but also a time of worship. The Greek word in the New Testament that is most often translated as “worship” is *proskuneo*, which means, literally, to “bow down before.” So tonight we invite you to bow down with the shepherds and the kings, but also to raise your voices with the angels, as we all sing “Gloria! Christ is born!” (*“Carols Suite” music begins*) Come, and join with us now as we worship together – “Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king!”

III. CAROLS SUITE

HOST: Songs have always been at the center of our Christmas celebrations. From street corners to church pews to gathering around the

family spinet in the den, the very heart of the season beats to the melodies we've come to cherish as...Christmas carols.

Carols have become such an automatic part of our Yuletide observances, we rarely pause to consider that each familiar lyric we sing is a word of heartfelt testimony. For instance, we've just finished singing "Hark, the herald angels sing! Glory to the newborn king! Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" These well-known words were actually the first stanza of a poem written in 1739 by an Anglican clergyman named Charles Wesley. Several months before, Charles had made a fiercely personal choice to accept Christ as his Savior – and yes, he was the "sinner reconciled" mentioned in the lyrics. Charles Wesley and his brother John went on to lead a tremendous revival and spiritual awakening in Europe and, ultimately, the establishment of the Methodist church. And now, more than 270 years later, we are still singing the Christmas testimony of Charles Wesley's heart.

(light keyboard or guitar underscore might start) New songs of Christmas testimony are still being written today...and still touching hearts and changing lives. In the fall of 2008, a new Christian singer named Sarah Schieber released a poignant song named "Christmas in Heaven." The song had deep personal meaning for her. The previous October, Sarah and her husband Chad – a fifteen-year veteran of the Midland Michigan police department – were running the Chicago Marathon. At mile 18, Chad dropped to the ground unconscious. In just minutes, he went home to be with the Lord, leaving Sarah and three children to work through months and years of grief. "Christmas in Heaven" became an important part of that healing process. About the song, she says, "I pray it will comfort those who have lost loved ones and are facing the holidays alone."

(underscore ends; true introduction of "Christmas in Heaven" begins)
For everyone who is missing someone this Christmas – may you be comforted by the Prince of Peace.

IV. CHRISTMAS IN HEAVEN

HOST: Christmas has always been the season of second chances. No matter how disappointing or difficult the previous year has been,

Christmas manages to lift our spirits and turn our eyes upward. Christmas is, indeed, joy to the world.

I recently had the opportunity to talk with a number of individuals in this church (*or in this community*) about the amazing renewal that Christmas offers. I asked different people to recall a Christmas that began with a struggle, but ended with a celebration. Here are a few of your stories:

(The HOST should read several real life accounts of Christmas experiences that involved initial hardship but resulted in renewed faith. The individuals can be named or remain anonymous; they can also step forward and share their stories in person, if desired. Attempt to represent several different age groups, including children. At the conclusion of the final story, the introduction to "Hope Is Born Again" begins.)

Let us never forget – with the birth of Jesus, God came near to us...He is here with us...and our hope is born again.

V. HOPE IS BORN AGAIN

HOST: Hope. *Hope*. Such a small word, but so powerful...and so transforming. I know how challenging these economic times are for so many families – and it may seem that Christmas simply multiplies these concerns.

Many years ago, a man named Robert MacGimsey shared your worries. A musician and author by trade, he was facing the same joblessness and hardship that our entire nation was suffering through during the Great Depression. On Christmas Eve, 1932, Robert was walking home along the crowded streets of New York City. He passed a number of noisy bars, overflowing with revelers. As he peered through the windows, he felt a wave of sadness wash over him: Why were these people not home with family, sitting around a brightly lit tree, singing carols? Then he realized that many of them did not have any family; some of them may not even have a home, and they chose to numb their pain and loneliness with alcohol, crowds and bright lights. "If Jesus was born today," he thought, "would any of these people know who He really was? Would I?" As Robert MacGimsey reached his front door, he felt moved to write a new carol – a carol for those searching souls in the New York speakeasies 80 years ago, and ultimately, for us.

VI. SWEET LITTLE JESUS BOY

HOST: Sweet little Jesus boy, asleep in His mother's arms. I imagine there was a great deal of noise in that stable 2,011 Christmas Eves ago. But the presence of the newborn Christ must have calmed the chaos and brought peace to many spirits: Silent night, holy night; all is calm...

Those beloved words were written by twenty-six-year-old Father Joseph Mohr, priest of the Church of St. Nicholas in Oberndorf, in the Austrian Alps. It was Christmas Eve, 1818, and Father Mohr was quite disappointed to discover that the organ would not play. Now this was a terrible situation, as all of the music for the traditional Christmas Eve service was written for the instrument. Attempting to remedy the situation, Father Mohr penned the words to a new song, "Stille nacht, helige nacht," and asked the organist, his friend Franz Gruber, to compose the music. The song was sung by the two men for the first time that very evening, accompanied by Gruber, playing the guitar. Early in 1819, Karl Mauracher came to the church to repair the organ. Father Mohr related the Christmas Eve story for him, and sang "Stille Nacht." Mauracher taught others the song as he traveled around repairing organs. The song was brought to America by German immigrants, and today it stands as one of the world's most cherished songs.

(introduction to "Nativity Suite" begins)

Come, now, and join us as we gather around the manger on this silent, holy night.

VII. NATIVITY SUITE

HOST: "Noel!" A joyous expression, usually shouted, commemorating the birth of Christ. "Noel!" Meaning, literally, "now all is well." "Noel!" Let us worship the newborn Savior together! Noel!

VIII. ADORATION SUITE

HOST: As you leave this place tonight...to go to your own homes and celebrations...may you take the spirit of the season – this joy to the world – with you; not only today, but tomorrow, the next day, the next day, and every day after. In the words of the poet:

“Let Christmas come tomorrow,
Not just Christmas day.
Have good news in September
And peace on earth in May.
Don’t leave it at the manger,
For that was just the start.
Let Christmas come tomorrow,
Keep Christmas in your heart.”*

IX. ALL YEAR LONG

(The end of “All year Long” should segue directly to the beginning of “We Wish You a Merry Christmas”.)

X. WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

**Robert and Cindy Sterling, Word Music & Two Fine Boys Music, 1997*