

CANTILENA DE NATIVITATE DOMINI

Seán Doherty
2020
SATB

PROGRAMME NOTE

This Christmas carol is from the Red Book of Ossory, written by the pugnacious churchman Richard de Ledrede. He served as the Bishop of Ossory (one of the ancient Irish Kingdoms) from 1317 until his death in 1360/61 at the episcopal see of St Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny. Ledrede is most remembered as a central figure in the Kilkenny Witch Trials of 1324 involving Alice Kyteler and her servant Petronella de Meath, in which the former was exiled and the latter was burnt at the stake. The Red Book of Ossory, so known because of its red leather binding, is still held at St Canice's Cathedral. Ledrede wrote these sixty Latin hymns to replace the bawdy secular songs preferred by the cathedral choir. It also contains a lengthy medical treatise on aqua vitae, *uisce beatha*, or whiskey, probably as a medicine for the Black Death that ravaged Kilkenny in 1348. Plague is a constant of human experience. It is cause for hope that the same cathedral choir who weathered the Black Death also weathered the COVID-19 pandemic. The Choir of St Canice's Cathedral gave the premiere of this piece on RTÉ One on Christmas Day 2020, when government restrictions forbid all liturgical singing bar that being broadcast.

Performance Time: *c.* 4 mins

Cantilena de Nativitate Domini

14th-Century Irish
 attrib. Richard de Ledrede
 from *The Red Book of Ossory*

Andante
ptenderly

S.
 A.
 T.
 B.

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est. De vir - gi - ne Ma - ri - a.

ptenderly

for rehearsal only

p

9

mp *mf*

1. Cu - ius no - men est qui est, Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est,
 2. Cu - ius ma - ter vir - go est, Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est,

mp *mf*

mp *mf*

17

p

Ab e - ter - na na - tus est, De pa - tris u - si - a.
 De - us hu - ma - na - tus est, Fe - lix ge - no - lo - gi - a.

p

p

25

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est. De vir - gi - ne Ma - ri - a.

33

3. Sal - va - tor nos - ter ip - se est, Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est, Et
4. Do - cet fi - des quod i - ta est, Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est, Re -

41

ju - dex qui ven - tu - rus est; Non sit con - tro - ver - si - a.
demp - tor mun - di na - tus est; Hec est sa - lu - tis vi - a.

Più mosso

49 *f* *ff*

5. Cunc - tis cre - a - tis qui_ pre - est, Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est, Laus e - ius no - bis ad -

rit.

Tempo primo

60 *p*

est; Le - te - mur men - te pi - a. Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est_ De

Meno mosso

dolce

molto rall.

pp

69 *pp*

vir - gi - ne_ Ma - ri - a. A - - - - men.