Performance Issues of Gloria by John Rutter

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Summary

The article acquaints the reader with the composition Gloria by the English composer John Rutter and his own experience with its performance.

My interest in the work of John Rutter is the result of research that is carried out at our University in Bydgoszcz on "Choral music of east and west cultures", which I am the head of. Two years ago, I presented a topic about J. Rutter's Requiem at a symposium in Usti nad Labem. The works of this composer are in the repertoire of the Academic Choir of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun (Poland), which I have been managing for 15 years. I would like to interest you, familiarize with the work of this English composer and encourage you to include these songs in the repertoire of your bands. Due to the small performance apparatus, because some vocal-instrumental works are also developed for chamber orchestra, the costs of performing these works are not high.

John Rutter composed *Gloria* for choir, brass band and organ in 1974. The history of the creation of this song is associated with the activities of Mel Olson, one of the better-known American conductors. In 1969 he founded the vocal ensemble The Voices in Omaha, which later adopted the name Master Singers. J. Rutter dedicated a few other works to this group, including Psalm 23 *The Lord is my Shepard*, which was also included in 1982 by the composer in his *Requiem*. This song was Rutter's first major foreign order.

Mel Olson ordered the hymn *Gloria* in 1974 for his newly formed band. Rutter arranged the voices of his composition in line with Olson's expectations, who wanted the

technical difficulties of this composition to be adapted to the capabilities of his band at the time. Specification of expectations, as one can guess analysing *Gloria* phrases, was not too complicated. Therefore, thanks to this amateur bands can currently perform the song. John Rutter in his statements emphasizes that Mel Olson had a great impact on the creation of the song: ... Much of the credit must go to Mel Olson ... because, in telling me what he was looking for in a new choral work, he was telling me what thousands of other choral directors were looking for too."

The premiere of this work sounded on May 5, 1974 in Omaha, Nebraska (USA). The orchestra cast during the premiere concert of the so-called Brass, constituted:

- a group of four trumpets,
- · two tenor trombones.
- · bass trombone,
- tube.
- cauldrons and other percussion instruments (2 or 3 players)
- organs

Instrumentation for orchestra:

- 2.2.2.2.-4.3.3.1
- Timpani, percussion, harp
- Strings

The duration of this song is about 17 minutes.

The first recording was made by the composer himself in 1984, with his band Cambridge Singers, with the participation of the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble and organist









John Scott. Over time, a more elaborated, alternative version for choir and symphony orchestra was created. It premiered in 1976. The orchestra version was recorded at Winchester Cathedral on January 2, 2001 by the Polyphony choir, Brass group Wallace Collection, the City of London orchestra and organist Andrew Lumsden conducted by Stephen Layton.

The Old Christian hymn *Gloria* is one of the six permanent parts of the Latin Mass (introduced in the second century by Pope Telesphorus). It is a liturgical part of the Catholic Mass and services, among others Lutheran church. It follows *Kyrie Eleison*.

Part One. Allegro vivace – "Gloria in excelsis Deo"

The first part is "Gloria in excelsis Deo" (Glory to God in the highest), a song of angels during the Annunciation for shepherds. The text is taken from the Gospel of St. Luke (Lk 2:14). (Picture 1)

Gloria in excelsis	Glory to God in the
Deo	highest
Et in terra pax	and on earth pe-
hominibus bonae	ace, good will to all
voluntatis.	people.
Laudamus Te,	We praise you,
benedicimus Te,	we bless you,
adoramus Te,	we worship you,
glorificamus Te.	we glorify you,
Gratias agimus Tibi	we give thanks to
	you
propter magnam	for your great glory.
gloriam Tuam	

This part is marked at Allegro vivace. It begins with a fanfare of wind instruments, both in the brass and symphonic versions. The choral parts are also arranged in fanfare, which emphasizes the solemn character. Fugato. The chorus voices appearing after the fragment softened by the organ part are harmonically melodious. Voices gather strength uniting musically in unison. The construction of the choral part (bars 185–200) clearly shows references to the

traditions of religious choral singing, where *Gloria in Excelsis* was a dialogical singing performed by two groups. Thanks to this (bars 203–227), the choir, with its imitative singing, gives the whole prayer joyful elation, even dance, and most importantly, it is a credible message of content *Propter magnam gloriam Tuam*. (Picture 2)

Thanks to the connection of the text with the event of Jesus' birth, this song can be included in Christmas concerts. (Picture 3)

Part Two. Andante - "Domine Deus"

Domine Deus, Rex	Lord God, hea-
coelestis,	venly King,
Deus Pater omni-	O God almighty
potens.	Father.
Domine Fili Unige-	Only Begotten
nite,	Son,
lesu Christe,	Lord Jesus Christ,
Domine Deus,	Lord God, Lamb of
Agnus Dei,	God,
Filius Patris:	Son of the Father,
Qui tollis peccata	you take away the
mundi	sins of the world,
miserere nobis;	have mercy on us;
Qui tollis peccata	you take away the
mundi	sins of the world,
suscipe deprecati-	receive our prayer;
onem nostram,	
Qui sedes ad dex-	you are seated at
teram Patris	the right hand of
	the Father,
miserere nobis.	have mercy on us.
	-

The words are is in their meaning a message of important intentions "asking for mercy and hearing prayers." However, there is no symbolism of anxiety or fear. In my opinion, this is a fragment of the song so typical of Rutter's style. He himself repeatedly emphasizes his fascinations with Gabriel Faure or Gustav Mahler. In this part of the song, the score radiates a noticeable warmth. Not only melodies are pleasant to the ear, but also the energetics of harmonic compounds in the constructed rhythmic layer typical for Rutter. It is marked at the





tempo of Andante. The movement of voices in the score is gentle on the background of ostinato organ accompaniment. (Picture 4) Gregorian singing is a great forming element here. It emphasizes the meaning of the text and, arranged in a very convincingly manner, allows performers to express a specific contemplative character. The singing of individual voices blends harmoniously with the organ background. (Picture 5)

There is some difficulty in the next fragment. Solo phrases for higher voices appear. It is good to leave them for the soloist to perform. I think a larger cast would be too strong for such a delicate musical texture. A reserved chamber cast will be a more credible illustration of this prayer. (Picture 6)

Part Three Vivace e ritmico – "Quoniam tu solus sanctus"

Quoniam Tu solus	For You alone are
Sanctus,	the Holy One,
Tu solus Dominus,	you alone are the
	Lord,
Tu solus Altissi-	you alone are the
mus,	Most High,
Iesu Christe,	Jesus Christ,
Cum Sancto Spiritu	with the Holy Spirit,
in gloria Dei Patris.	in the glory of God
Amen.	the Father. Amen

It is labelled Vivace e ritmico. In fact, rhythm plays a key role here. Some difficulties will certainly be caused by odd rhythm groups and variable, irregular metre. This final part is the climax of the whole work. Musically, it refers to the phrases from the beginning of the song; in places, one gets the impression that it is a symbolic 'awakening' after prayer contemplation in the previous part. After a few initial phrases that introduce a somewhat chaotic situation in the choral voices, the fugue *Cum Sancto Spiritu* appears. (Picture 7)

In this part of the work, it will be most difficult to achieve executive precision. For amateur choirs not only rhythm but also harmonic, seemingly dissonant thematic narrative of choral voices, pose many difficulties. The situation was completely different in the case of the fugato from the first part, in which the appearing imitations harmonized with each other. The whole ends with the fast tempo of the accompanying orchestra to the finale sung by the choir – Amen.

Arrangement for the choir is very interesting and at the same time is not breakneck for voices in the use of scale. Of course, the rhythmicity of the choral texture is very varied in places (especially in the fugue in the third part) but an efficient singer, not only a professional one, certainly can overcome it. (Picture 8)

The song has been recorded several times and has been successful for years. Both professionals and secular bands perform it. Due to its joyful nature and relatively short duration for a song from the group of the so-called great vocal and instrumental forms it is often included in the concert program. The Academic Choir of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun under my direction performed *Gloria* many times, both in organ and in symphonic versions.

The composition is popular among mixed choirs. In recent years, however, one can notice a trend that prefers high boys' voices as well as alto parts sung by men. Indeed and with conviction, one can admit that such a composition gives a pleasant tone to the choral sound of early music.







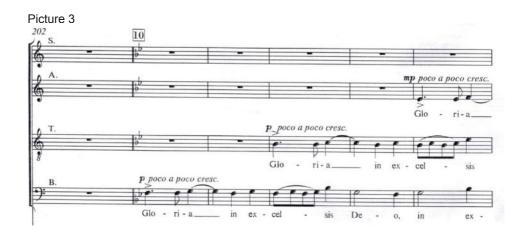
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Picture 1



Picture 2

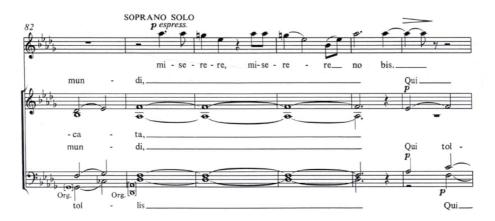


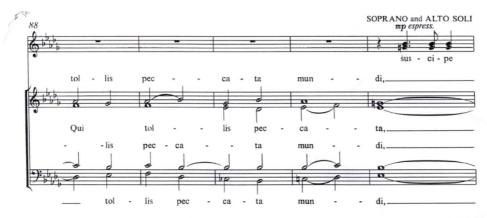




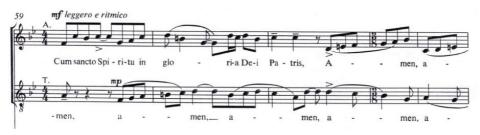


Picture 5





Picture 6





příspěvky



Résumé

Příspěvek seznamuje čtenáře se skladbou Gloria anglického skladatele Johna Ruttera a vlastními zkušenostmi s jejím prováděním.

Klíčová slova: anglický skladatel John Rutter, skladba Gloria, sborová tvorba.

Keywords: English composer John Rutter, composition Gloria, Choral music.

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