

O magnum mysterium

a 8

by

Charles H. Giffen

for

SSAT - ATBB

a cappella

voices

Adapted and arranged from the 12-part original motet

Notes on the composition

In this work, I have tried to capture the awe and reflect an aura of the calm, deep-night mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus in Bethlehem, where stable animals witnessed, with Mary and Joseph, a cosmic event that changed the course of history for ever - occurring in that “fulness of time, fixed by the unsearchable counsel of God, when the Son of God took upon him the nature of man, that he might reconcile it to its Maker.”

The music includes mainly twelve tone thematic but also whole tone harmonic material, which lend a sense of mystery and reverence as the music unfolds. The given markings for tempo are approximate and may be adjusted to suit the performance acoustics. This double choir SSAT - ATBB setting has been adapted and arranged from the triple choir SSAT - SATB - ATBB original, but an attempt has been made to preserve the essence of the latter. The two 4-part choirs may be separated by some distance if there is adequate space in the performance venue.

The text is the full responsory to the fourth lesson at Matins of Christmas Day and hence includes the short *Ave Maria, gratia plena: Dominus tecum* that is often omitted in musical settings.

<i>O magnum mysterium</i>	O great mystery
<i>et admirabile sacramentum,</i>	and wonderful sacrament,
<i>ut animalia viderent Dominum natum</i>	that animals should see the new-born Lord
<i>jacentem in præsepio!</i>	lying in a manger!

<i>O beata Virgo, cujus viscera</i>	O blessed is the Virgin, whose womb
<i>meruerunt portare Dominum Christum.</i>	was worthy to bear Christ the Lord.

<i>Ave Maria, gratia plena:</i>	Hail Mary, full of grace:
<i>Dominus tecum.</i>	the Lord is with you.

<i>O beata Virgo, cujus viscera</i>	Blessed is the Virgin whose womb
<i>meruerunt portare Dominum Christum.</i>	was worthy to bear Christ the Lord.

<i>Alleluia!</i>	Alleluia!
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O magnum mysterium

Fourth responsory for
Matins of Christmas Day

SSAT - ATBB

Charles H. Giffen, 2013

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 40$

p

Cantus 1

ma -

p *p*

Medius 1

O *gnum*

p *p*

Choir 1 (SSAT)
left side

Altus 1

O *my - - - -*

p

Tenor 1

gnum

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 40$

p

Altus 2

gnum

p *p*

Tenor 2

ma - - - - *ste - ri - um.*

p *p*

Barytonus 2

my - - - - - *um.*

p

Bassus 2

ri - um.

13

C 1

p

O my - ste - ri - um, _____

M 1

p

O my - ste - ri - um, _____

A 1

pp *p* *mp*

my - ste - ri - um, _____ O ma - gnum my - ste - ri - um, _____

T 1

ppp *pp* *p* *mp*

O ma - gnum _____ O ma - gnum my - ste - ri - um, _____

13

A 2

pp *p* *mp*

my - ste - ri - um, _____ O ma - gnum my - ste - ri - um, _____

T 2

ppp *pp* *p* *mp*

O ma - gnum _____ O ma - gnum my - ste - ri - um, _____

Bt 2

ppp *pp* *p* *mp*

O ma - gnum _____ O ma - gnum my - ste - ri - um, _____

B 2

ppp *pp* *p* *mp*

O ma - gnum _____ O ma - gnum my - ste - ri - um, _____

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 48$

23

C 1

M 1

A 1 *mp* *p* *mf*

et _____ ad - mi - ra - bi - le Al-le-lu - ia! _____

T 1 *p*

Al-le-lu - ia! _____ sa - cra - men - tum _____

A 2 *p*

Al-le-lu - ia! _____ Al-le-lu - ia! _____

T 2 *p*

Al-le-lu - ia! _____

Bt 2 *p*

Al-le-lu - ia! _____

B 2 *mp*

et _____ ad - mi - ra - bi - le

29 *mf*

C 1 *ut* _____ *a - ni - ma-li - a* *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____ *p*

M 1 *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____ *mf* *vi - de - rent* _____

A 1 *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____ *p* *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____ *Al-le-lu - ia!*

T 1 *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____ *p*

A 2 *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____ *p* *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____

T 2 *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____ *mp* *ut* _____ *a - ni - ma-li - a*

Bt 2 *mf* *sa - cra - men - tum* _____ *Al-le-lu - ia!* *p*

B 2 *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____ *p* *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____ *Al-le-lu - ia!* _____

35 $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 60$
mp *f*

C 1 *Al-le-lu-ia!* *Do - mi-num na - tum*
mp *f*

M 1 *Do - mi-num na - tum*
mp *f*

A 1 *Do - mi-num na - tum*
mp *f*

T 1 *Al-le-lu-ia!* *Do - mi-num na - tum*
mp *f*

35 *mp* $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 60$
mp *f*

A 2 *vi - - - de - rent* *Do - mi-num na - tum*
p *mp* *f*

T 2 *Al-le-lu-ia!* *Do - mi-num na - tum*
p *mp* *f*

Bt 2 *Do - mi-num na - tum*
mp *f*

B 2 *Al-le-lu-ia!* *Do - mi-num na - tum*
mp *f*

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 48$

53

C 1

M 1

A 1

T 1

A 2

T 2

Bt 2

B 2

p *mf* *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *mf* *p* *p* *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *mf* *p*

ra —

sce - - - ra —

vi - - - ra —

vi - - -

O — ta — go, — sce - - - ra —

be - Vir - cu - - - sce - - - ra —

a - Vir - jus — sce - - - ra —

a - go, — jus — sce - - - ra —

65

p *mp* *mf* *f*

C 1 e - ta - mi - Chri - - - stum. —

p *mp* *mf* *f*

M 1 ru - por - mi - - - Chri - - - stum. —

p *mp* *mf* *f*

A 1 me - por - Do - - - Chri - - - stum. —

p *mp* *mf* *f*

T 1 me - runt — re — Chri - - - stum. —

65 *mf* *f*

A 2 num — stum. —

mf *f*

T 2 num — stum. —

mf *f*

Bt 2 Chri - - - stum. —

f

B 2 stum. —

78 $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 60$

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

C 1

A - ve Ma - ri - a, _____ gra - ti - a ple - na: _____ Do - mi - nus te - cum. _____

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

M 1

A - ve Ma - ri - a, _____ gra - ti - a ple - na: _____ Do - mi - nus te - cum. _____

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

A 1

A - ve Ma - ri - a, _____ gra - ti - a ple - na: _____ Do - mi - nus te - cum. _____

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

T 1

A - ve Ma - ri - a, _____ gra - ti - a ple - na: _____ Do - mi - nus te - cum. _____

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 60$

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

A 2

A - ve Ma - ri - a, _____ gra - ti - a ple - na: _____ Do - mi - nus te - cum. _____

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

T 2

A - ve Ma - ri - a, _____ gra - ti - a ple - na: _____ Do - mi - nus te - cum. _____

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

Bt 2

A - ve Ma - ri - a, _____ gra - ti - a ple - na: _____ Do - mi - nus te - cum. _____

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

B 2

A - ve Ma - ri - a, _____ gra - ti - a ple - na: _____ Do - mi - nus te - cum. _____

♩ = c. 48

91

C 1

M 1 *p*

O be - a - ta Vir - - - go, cu - jus vi - sce -

A 1 *mp*

O be - a - ta _____ Vir - go, _____ cu - jus vi -

T 1 *p*

O be - a - ta Vir - - - go, cu - jus vi - sce -

91

A 2

T 2

Bt 2

B 2 *mp* *mf*

O be - a - ta _____ Vir - go, cu - jus vi - sce - ra _____

97 *mp* *mf*

C 1 *me - ru - e - runt* *por - ta - re Do - mi - num Chri - stum.*

M 1 *ra*

A 1 *sce - ra*

T 1 *ra*

97 *p* *mp* *p*

A 2 *me - ru - e - runt por - ta - re Do - mi - num Chri -*

T 2 *me - ru - e - runt por - ta - re Do - mi - num*

Bt 2 *me - ru - e - runt por - ta - re Do - mi - num Chri -*

B 2

103 *mf*

C 1 Chri - stum.

M 1 *mf* Chri - stum.

A 1 *mf* Do - mi - num Chri - stum.

T 1 *mf* Do - mi - num Chri - stum.

103 *mf*

A 2 stum. Do - mi - num Chri - stum.

T 2 *mf* Chri - stum. Chri - stum.

Bt 2 *mf* stum. Do - mi - num.

B 2 *mf* Do - mi - num.

♩ = c. 40

111

C 1 *f* lu - - -

M 1 *mf* Al - - - - -

A 1 *mp* Al - - - *mf* ya! _____

T 1 *mp* le - - - *mf* le - - -

A 2 *p* le - - - *mp* ya! _____

T 2 *p* ya! _____

Bt 2 *p* Al - - - *mf* lu - - - - -

B 2 *mp* lu - - - -

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 48$

123 *mp*

C 1 *Al - lu -*

M 1 *le - - - ia!*

A 1 *mf* *mp*
Al-le-lu - ia, al - le - lu - i - a, al - le - lu - i - a!

T 1

A 2 *mf* *mp*
Al-le-lu - ia, al - le - lu - i - a, al - le - lu - i - a!

T 2 *mf*
Al - le - lu - ia!

Bt 2 *mf*
Al - le - lu - ia!

B 2 *mf*
Al - le - lu - ia!

132 *mp* *p* *mp* $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 40$

C 1 *mp* *p* *mp*
Al-le-lu - ia, al - le - lu - i - a, al - le - lu - i - a!

M 1 *mp* *p* *mp*
Al-le-lu - ia, al - le - lu - i - a, al - le - lu - i - a!

A 1 *p* *mp*
le - - - ia! Al - le - lu -

T 1 *p* *mp*
Al - lu - Al - le - lu -

A 2 *p* *mp* $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 40$
Al - lu - Al - le - lu -

T 2 *p* *p* *mp*
le - - - ia! A - le - lu -

Bt 2 *p* *mp*
Al - le - lu -

B 2 *p* *mp*
Al - le - lu -

Original motet *a* 12: 24 June 2011
Adapted motet *a* 8: 17 July 2013