

Advent and Christmas Carols at CUC Are Now Here!

This year, more than any year in recent memory, I am so grateful that the mirth and meaning of Advent and Christmas will conclude 2020. Since the pandemic shutdown in March, I've been especially looking forward to this time of year, a time which is literally etched into my Haitian Creole-derived surname – “Noëlliste” – which translates as “lover of Christmas.”

On November 10, my overexuberance for the season resulted in a seven-hour long recording session (thanks Tag!) chock-full of Advent and Christmas music – nine choral recordings and five solo recordings of traditional carols to be exact! I can't wait for us to experience these carols together in our upcoming video worship services. Traditional carols will be featured through the season till Sunday, January 3, in order to celebrate both liturgical seasons: Advent, from November 29 to Christmas Eve, and Christmastide, from Christmas Day into the New Year up until January 5.

Whereas our video services will feature traditional carols, our outdoor Christmas Eve service at Chatfield Farms will include a mix of traditional carols and moving, contemporary worship music for the season. Additionally, the service will involve a professional string quartet!

To end this post, I'd like to share an obscure traditional and contemporary carol both of which will be included in services this season.

An Obscure Traditional Carol

Our obscure traditional carol is *Schlafendes JesusKind*, composed in 1888 in the German lieder (art song) tradition by late romantic period German-Austrian based composer, Hugo Wolf (and as we know, many of the world's most iconic traditional carols hail from this region of the world, such as *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*; *Still, Still, Still*; *O Christmas Tree*; and *Silent Night* to name a few). *Schlafendes JesusKind* is a musical setting of a poem by Eduard Frederich Mörike based on the following painting by Francesco Albani entitled "The Child Jesus Sleeping on a Cross."



The painting's juxtaposition of innocence and death is startling and elicits a thoughtful, contemplative poem and musical setting. What sort of dream is baby Jesus having in this depiction? An English translation is given below. The following YouTube link provides a performance by famed German baritone Fischer-Dieskau and English pianist Gerald Moore, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAFhH8OEYjo>.

*Son of the Virgin, child of Heaven, on the ground
Upon the wood of suffering Thou hast fallen asleep,
that the pious master, meaningfully playful,
Has placed under Thy light dreams;
Flower Thou, still only encompassing
Half-lit in the bud the glory of the Father!
Oh could one see what images
Behind this brow, behind these black
Lashes, are painted in gentle alternation!*

An Obscure Contemporary Carol

Our obscure contemporary carol is titled provocatively *The Refugee King*, a modern-day adaptation of the traditional carol, *Away in a Manger*, birthed at a December 2018 conference at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Christian singer, Liz Vice, along with a number of theologians, pastors, and fellow Christian musicians, were led to create this arrangement in response to the caging of children and the separation of families at the US border – a hotly debated political issue at the time which endures to the present day. In the midst of current treatment of refugees, this moving carol reminds us that Jesus and his family were of the same status, refugees fleeing to Egypt to escape the death sanctioned by King Herod that would befall Jesus if they remained in their homeland. The lyrics are given below and the following YouTube link is the first recorded performance of the carol filmed backstage at the December 2018 conference at Calvin Institute, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThaVvxuFCP8>.

Away from the manger they ran for their lives
The crying boy Jesus, a son they must hide
A dream came to Joseph, they fled in the night
And they ran and they ran and they ran
Ooh
No stars in the sky but the Spirit of God
Led down into Egypt from Herod to hide
No place for his parents no country or tribe
And they ran and they ran and they ran
Ooh
Stay near me Lord Jesus when danger is nigh
And keep us from Herods and all of their lies
I love the Lord Jesus, the Refugee King
And we sing and we sing and we sing
And we sing and we sing and we sing

Alleluia...