

Quire Cleveland takes on seven languages in its Carols for Quire VII performances

by Daniel Hathaway



When Anglophones sing in a choir, they expect to encounter Latin, and perhaps some German. Spanish and French not so much, and rarely Finnish or Latvian. The 21 members of Quire Cleveland will find all those languages tripping off their collective tongues this weekend as the ensemble presents the seventh edition of “Carols for Quire from the Old & New Worlds.” Quire will sing

three identical programs under the direction of founder Ross W. Duffin on Friday, December 4 at Trinity Cathedral and on Saturday and Sunday, December 5 and 6 at Historic St. Peter’s Church, all in downtown Cleveland (tickets available [online](#).)

“This program harks back to two years ago when we paired classical and modern carols with related texts,” Duffin said in a telephone conversation from his office at CWRU. “This time there are larger groups of related pieces.”

For example, after Quire begins with Henry G. Gauntlett’s *Once in Royal David’s City* (the famous carol that opens the annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King’s College, Cambridge), they’ll turn to four carols that express the joy of the Christmas season. The 15th century English carol, *Make we joy now in this fest* and its modern setting by William Walton bookend the “Joy” section of the program. In between come a 16th century Finnish carol, *Iloidcam ja remuidcam*, and Giaches de Wert’s *Gaudete in Domino* — the same emotion expressed in three languages over three centuries.

Duffin has arranged two of those carols himself, the Finnish one with the help of a singer at Cambridge University who recorded the sung text so Quire could get the pronunciation right. “He was very excited to do that, because there’s not much Finnish music from that era.”

The same linguistic challenge arose in Andrejs Jansons' *Meklētāja ceļš ir galā*, which appears in the "Flowers" section of the program. Duffin plans to have Quire sing its text both in Latvian and English, and he tracked down a singer in Toronto who recorded the Latvian text for Quire's benefit.

Duffin said that the program features "lots of fun things, like John Rutter's gorgeous *There is a flow'r* and two carols by Joseph Stevenson, *Anthem from 'Luke'*, and *Arise and hail the sacred day*. Stevenson was English, but some of his music was printed in America. It sounds like Shape-Note music."

Some pieces have already become favorites with the singers. "*Die zwölf heiligen Zahlen* in the "Twelfth Night" section is a counting song from a 16th-century German Haggadah — similar to *Green grow the rushes-O*. We read through it and everybody was having the greatest time."

Along with pieces by Richard Dering, Ludwig Senfl, Guillaume Dufay and Jacobus Clemens non papa, Duffin has programmed the Shepherd's Chorus from Hector Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ*, with an organ part to be played by Nicholas Haigh, and folk carols from England and Appalachia. One such English tune, *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day*, will be sung in an arrangement by the famous King's College choirmaster David Willcocks, who died in September. The concert will end with a setting of *The Twelve Days of Christmas* arranged by Ian Humphris.

"The concert integrates early pieces with newer ones — a Quire tradition. This is a time of the year for which people wrote a great deal of choral music for people to hear and enjoy."

Published on ClevelandClassical.com December 1, 2015.

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