

Candlemas Carol
(Simeon's Song)

Christmastide, Epiphany
SATB with Organ Accompaniment

Candlemas commemorates the presentation of the Christ child in the temple, as recorded in Luke 2:22–39. The feast day is celebrated on February 2—forty days after Jesus's birth, in accordance with Jewish law (Leviticus 12:1–4). This carol is particularly suitable for Candlemas day and the associated Sunday, and might also be sung at any time during the seasons of Christmastide and Epiphany.

Marian's lyric portrays devout Simeon as he holds the infant Jesus in his arms, with Mary and Joseph looking on in amazement. Simeon speaks the beautiful *Nunc Dimittis*—the Latin title for his prayer beginning “Now you dismiss your servant in peace....”

There are countless musical settings of the *Nunc Dimittis*, consisting of Simeon's prayer to God (Luke 2:28–32). Marian's lyric is unusual in that it embraces also the second half of Simeon's utterance (Luke 2:33–35)—largely neglected in music of the church—where his haunting words addressed to Mary foreshadow future suffering for the holy family.

The anthem's tune is the Catalonian *Carol of the Birds*. My arrangement here adapts a solo setting of the carol's traditional words with accompaniment by the late Walter Ehret (*The International Book of Christmas Carols*, Walton Music, 1980). This choral version is by Mr. Ehret's kind permission.

The haunting character of this carol relates to its embracing of varying minor modes. The opening phrase (mss. 1–3) establishes the song's basic tonality of harmonic minor, defined by the B-flat and C-sharp, yet immediately a C-natural evokes aeolian mode (mss. 3–5). The central phrases of the carol are in harmonic minor, and the song closes with a phrase in aeolian (mss. 18–22). Mr. Ehret's harmonies marvelously enrich the melody's modal complexity.

Albert Blackwell
January 10, 2012

Candlemas Carol

Dedicated to Father Timothy Dombek

Marian Willard Blackwell

Catalonian Carol

Arr. Albert Blackwell*

Women

With quiet intensity

The par-ents of our Lord brought Je-sus when a babe for bless-ing to Je-

Organ

6

ru - sa-lem. There Sim - e - on the pure stood at the Tem-ple door to

*Permission to arrange this piece given by Walter Ehret.

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12

wel-come in the Sav - ior. There Sim - e - on the pure — stood

12

18

at the Tem - ple door to wel - come in the sav - ior.

18

Soprano

2.The old man took the babe, and prais-ing God he cried, "I am pre-pared for

Alto

2.The old man took the babe ___ and prais-ing God he cried, "I am pre-pared for

Tenor

2.The old man took the babe ___ and prais-ing God he cried, ___ "I am pre-pared for

Bass

2.The old man took the babe and prais-ing God he cried, "I am pre-pared for

Organ

6

dy - ing. These fail - ing eyes have seen a light for all the world. Sal -

dy - ing. These fail - ing eyes have seen a light for all the world. Sal -

dy - ing. These fail - ing eyes have seen a light for all the world. Sal -

dy - ing. These fail - ing eyes have seen a light for all the world. Sal -

6

12

va - tion here is ly - ing." "These fail - ing eyes have seen ___ a

va - tion here is ly - ing." "These fail - ing eyes have seen a

va - tion here is ly - ing." "These fail - ing eyes have seen a

va - tion here is ly - ing." "These fail - ing eyes have seen a

12

18

light for all the world. Sal - va - tion here is ly - ing."

light for all the world. Sal - va - tion here is ly - ing."

light for all the world. Sal - va - tion here is ly - ing."

light for all the world. Sal - va - tion here is ly - ing."

18

Soprano

3. And then he turned to say to Ma-ry much a - mazed, "There's sor-row in the

Alto

3. And then he turned to say _____ to Ma-ry much a - mazed, "There's sor-row in the

Tenor

3. O _____ O _____

Bass

3. O _____ O _____

Organ

Verse 3 may be played up an octave

6

mak - ing. Your boy comes as a sign. He will be sore op - posed. Your

mak - ing. Your boy comes as a sign. He will be sore op - posed. Your

O _____ O _____ O _____

O _____ O _____

6

12

heart he will be break - ing." "Your boy comes as a sign. He

heart he will be break - ing." "Your boy comes as a sign. He

O O O

12

18

will be sore op - posed. Your heart he will be break - ing."

will be sore op - posed. Your heart he will be break - ing."

18

Soprano

4.The par-ents of our Lord brought Je - sus when a babe for bless-ing to Je -

Alto

4.The par-ents of our Lord brought Je - sus when a babe for bless-ing to Je -

Tenor

Bass

Organ

6

ru - sa-lem. There Sim - e - on the pure stood at the Tem - ple door to

6

ru - sa-lem. There Sim - e - on the pure stood at the Tem - ple door to

6

12 wel-come in the Sa - vior. "These fail - ing eyes have seen — a

12 wel-come in the Sa - vior. "These fail - ing eyes have seen a

8 "These fail - ing eyes have seen a

12 "These fail - ing eyes have seen a

18 light for all the world. Sal - va - tion here is ly - ing." *rit.*

18 light for all the world. Sal - va - tion here is ly - ing." *rit.*

8 light for all the world. Sal - va - tion here is ly - ing." *rit.*

18 light for all the world. Sal - va - tion here is ly - ing." *rit.*