

Maria, Mother of Our Joy

by

Johannes Brahms

SATB, *A Cappella* or with Accompaniment
Advent, Christmastide

“Maria, Mother of Our Joy” is a setting of “Marias Lob,” the last of the seven *Marienlieder*, Opus 22, of Johannes Brahms (1833–97). The English lyric is mine. I have endeavored to remain true to the tender feeling, the rhyme scheme, and the graceful rhythmic matching of words and music in Brahms’ original.

While the song is available in various English translations of the original German lyric, I find them problematic. Brahms drew the lyrics for his *Marienlieder* from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, the landmark collection of traditional German folk poems, where the intensely pietistic imagery associated with Mary seems to me out of tune with worship in most congregations today:

“My soul and my life / by love torn asunder / burst into flame at your name.”

“The world for me is spoiled, / I seek to die.”

German rhyme schemes and rhythms often fail in the English translations, or lead to strained diction.

The musical setting here is Brahms’ own. I have lowered the key by a whole step in order to limit the tenor range to a high G-flat.

Albert Blackwell
September 3, 2012

Maria, Mother of Our Joy

Albert Blackwell

Johannes Brahms (1833–97)

Arr. Albert Blackwell

Flowing gently

1. Ma - ri - a, mo - ther of our joy, our heart's most pure de -
2. As shines a can - dle in the gloom and spreads its ra - diance
3. Cre - a - tion's love - liest or - na - ment with thee can - not com -
4. Ma - ri - a, bless - ed com - for - ter of all who look to

light! Who can thy worth meas - ure? Who would thee not treas - ure? The
bright, e'en so is the glow - ing of God's love o'er - flow - ing from
pare. The flow - ers so ten - der thy prais - es must ren - der. They
thee, may thy faith e'er guide us, thy Child e'er be - side us, of

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9

Christ-child now bear-ing, sal-va-tion pre-par-ing, on this most
 thy face most ho-ly, in sta-ble so low-ly, now warmed by
 bloom, then they with-er; thy gift is for-ev-er, God's chos-en
 God's own in-still-ing, the mys-tic ful-fill-ing of thy words

9

14

ho-ly night, this most ho-ly night,
 heav-en's light, warmed by heav-en's light,
 ves-sel fair, cho-sen words, ves-sel fair,
 "Let it be," thy words "Let it be."

14

ho-ly night.
 heav-en's light.
 ves-sel fair.
 "Let it be."