“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. Maria, mother of our joy, our heart's most pure
delight!

2. As shines a candle in the gloom and spreads its radiance
light! Who can thy worth measure? Who would thee not treasure?

3. Creation's loveliest ornament with thee cannot come
bright, e'en so is the glowing of God's love e'er flowing from

4. Maria, blessed comforter of all who look to
thee, may thy faith e'er guide us, thy Child e'er be side us, of

Free Anthems for Church Choirs, © 2012 by Albert Blackwell,
is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.
Christ-child now bearing, salvation preparing, on this most warmed by
thy face most holy, in stable so lowly, now God's chosen
bloom, then they wither; thy gift is forever, God's own
God's own instilling, the mystic fulfilling of thy words

ho-ly night.
heaven's light.
ves-sel fair.

"Let it be."