



PROGRAM NOTES

BY JAYNE SOUTHWICK COOL

ABOUT THE TEXT

This hymn-anthem speaks to the mystery and wonder of the Incarnation. Through the experience of shepherds who were, at first, startled by the appearance of an angel but then filled with exhilaration to learn that their long-awaited Savior had been born, we can imagine their “great joy.” Still more breathtakingly spectacular was the appearance of a multitude of heavenly host declaring that all glory belonged to God for this remarkable event. They announced that a peace such as the world had never known came to earth that day. It was God’s plan all along to bring righteousness, justice, mercy, grace, truth, and salvation to all through faith in this child who is the “Son of God, Emmanuel.” It is with these words that the first and last stanzas come to a close.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The melody and harmonization of this hymn-anthem are original. However, the accompaniment occasionally borrows familiar melodies from well-known carols. This was done in order to musically enhance the text, creating a connection between these new words and a memory of the old.

THE FIRST NOWELL appears in stanza 2. The story of an angel speaking to shepherds calls to mind, “*The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay...*”

In stanza 3 we identify the refrain of GLORIA, albeit altered to a triple meter, and a phrase of REGENT SQUARE, it’s duple meter intact, but somewhat hidden. The text speaks of heavenly host proclaiming God’s glory and peace to all on earth as we recall, “*Gloria in excelsis Deo*” and “*Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o’er all the earth...*”

Finally, the anthem ends with “Emmanuel” on the lips of the singers, followed by the ending of the refrain of VENI, EMMANUEL (“*...shall come to you, O Israel.*”) gently drifting into our consciousness.