Poculi Ludique Societas & St. Thomas’s Anglican Church present

A Medieval Christmas:
Such splendid sight was never seen

Friday, December 13, 7:30 pm
Saturday, December 14, 2:00 pm & 7:30 pm
at St. Thomas’s Church
383 Huron Street, Toronto

**Band:**
Janice Kerckkamp, flute
Jason Caron, trombone
Alessandro Arizzi, violin
Alexander Smith, violoncello

**Choir:**
Jason Caron
Lora Crighton
Jay Lambie
Jennifer McCallum
John Meadows
Tim Neufeldt
Janet Nichols
Jean Nichols
Dorothy Parr
Carol Percy

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Tim Neufeldt
Janet Nichols
Jean Nichols
Dorothy Parr
Carol Percy

**Cast, in alphabetical order**
Sara Ciantar  Gib (a shepherd)
Jeff Creighton  Third Shepherd, Messenger
Alice Degan  God, Balthasar (a king)
Theo Ipema  Joseph
David Jones  Jack, Herod’s retinue
Julia Meadows  Mary
Rob Mitchell  Herod
J.P. Napier  Herod’s retinue
Madeleine Redican  Gabriel
Martin Reinink  Melchior (a king)
Maureen Somerville  Elizabeth
Timothy Wright  (a shepherd), Jaspar (a king)
John Horn

**Production**
Kimberley Radmacher  Director
Charlotte Steenbrugge  Assistant Director, Co-producer, Costume Designer
Linda J. Phillips  Clerical Consultant, Co-producer
Fr Rob Mitchell
Katherine Belyea  Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager
Laina Southgate
Bryan Martin  Music Director
Madeleine Redican  Master Puppeteer, Set & Puppet/Construction
Charlotte Steenbrugge  Publicity
Alice Degan  Poster Design
Julia Armstrong  Front of House
Irenaldo Coleman  Photographer
Marilyn Ramsingh  Graphics
Thomas J. Sheridan
Willem Hart

**Special thanks to:**
Barbara Obrai, The Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto

**About PLS**
The mission of PLS (Poculi Ludique Societas) is to rediscover the theatrical traditions of the Middle Ages and Renaissance through textual research and dramatic experimentation, and to bring those traditions to life for contemporary audiences of all ages. PLS sponsors productions of early plays, from the beginnings of medieval drama to as late as the middle of the seventeenth century. As part of the Centre for Performance Studies in Early Theatre, PLS operates in affiliation with the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto. PLS also collaborates with the theatre history research project Records of Early English Drama (REED) at the University of Toronto.

**About St. Thomas’s Anglican Church**
St. Thomas’s Anglican Church is a parish of the Anglican Church of Canada. It was one of the earliest Anglo-Catholic congregations in Canada. It was established in 1874, moving twice before settling into its present Arts and Crafts building, designed by parishioner and renowned Toronto architect Eden Smith. St. Thomas’s has a strong tradition of musical excellence and involvement in the arts.

Next from PLS: ‘Lancelot of Denmark’ and ‘Of Winter and Summer’. In the Spring PLS will produce two plays (abele spelen) translated from the Middle Dutch Van Hulthem Manuscript (dated 1400-1410). ‘Lancelot of Denmark’ was an extremely popular romance which continued to be performed well into the 18th century.
Gilbert and Sands were from Cornish families, and this connection was especially important for their carol collections. Cornwall was both remote and conservative, which made it an ideal place for the development and retention of folk songs and customs, making Cornwall one of the richest source of British folk carols. There is a definite pre-Reformation flavour to many of these, with an emphasis on such topics as the fall of man and the virgin birth. The music, however, seems to be related to the gallery choir and band tradition that sprung up in the eighteenth century, and was just beginning to wane when these collections were published.

We have created a small gallery choir and band, with instruments that were commonly available. The music frequently only includes the tune and a bass line; the rest would have been created by the performers or their leaders. I owe a great debt to the editors of The New Oxford Book of Carols, Hugh Keyte and Andrew Parrott, who fleshed out many of these tunes with additional parts in an appropriate style. Most of the arrangements are based on these; I can claim credit only for the distribution of parts, as well as for the arrangements of the first carol (The Lord at First Had Adam Made) and the instrumental version of the last (The First Nowell).

Of course, none of this could be done without the generous assistance of my friends and colleagues. My heartfelt thanks go out to all of you!

Bryan Martin

Music:
1. The Lord at First Had Adam Made (Sands 1833)
2. Hark! What News the Angels Bring (Joseph Stephenson, fl. 1760-1775) (instrumental; based on the Walton (Buckinghamshire) waits' version, collected 1919 by H. E. D. Hammond)
3. When God at First Created Man (to verse “An angel then from Heav’n was sent”) (Gilbert)
4. When Righteous Joseph Wedded Was (Gilbert)
5. God’s Dear Son, Without Beginning (Gilbert)
6. Come, Landlord, Fill the Flowing Bowl (English traditional, from 19th-century versions)
7. Christians, Awake! (John Wainwright, ca. 1723-1768, as in Gilbert) (sung twice)
8. Hark! Hark! What News the Angels Bring (Joseph Stephenson, fl. 1760-1775) (Sands 1833)
9. In Those Twelve Days (instrumental; Sands 1831)
10. Hark! Hark! What News the Angels Bring (see no. 2)
11. Hark! Hark! What News the Angels Bring (see no. 2)
12. The First Nowell (instrumental; Sands 1832; vocal: arr. John Stainer, 1840-1901)

This year we have undertaken a very ambitious project, using scripts from the Towneley manuscript—which were known as the Wakefield Cycle when I was an undergrad. I am particularly pleased to get to work with these plays again, since the very first play I ever directed was the Wakefield Noah’s Flood. I feel a nostalgic affinity to these plays for that reason. And nostalgia is the underlying theme of our production this year. The Christmas we celebrate today, of course, is inflected with pagan nuances and influences from many cultures, not to mention a more recent rampant consumerism that threatens to overtake the spiritual underpinnings of this celebration. But for me, as a child, Christmas was a time of wonder and enchantment. I loved the Christmas tree and decorating cookies and making Christmas cards and learning to sing the carols. These are all aspects of Christmas celebration that we have inherited from the 19th century. So when our music director, Bryan Martin, suggested using music from that era I jumped at the idea. Our entire production is inspired by the musical choice. Our efforts to recreate the absolute charm of light and scenic spectacle that marked theatre production in 19th-century England, especially, along with romanticised depictions of the distant past through costumes and shadow puppets, we hope, will transport you, for a while, into that world of utter delight.

Although the scripts we use are always different from the ones produced in previous productions of A Medieval Christmas, the characters will all be familiar. Poor Joseph has no idea what’s going on: How in the world did his sweet maiden wife come to be with child! There are the rustic shepherds whose mean world is brightened by the promise of salvation. And there are the noble kings whose wisdom and scholarship lead them to Bethlehem where they humble themselves before the Saviour. And of course we have the infantile Herod whose insecure hyperbole creates endless hilarity. As in previous years, we have selected an arrangement of plays that form a Nativity sequence. But in the Towneley manuscript we are presented with two shepherds’ plays, so we had to choose just one. The best known of the two is The Second Shepherds Play, which typically appears in English textbooks and undergrad survey courses. I’ve performed in and/or been involved with productions of that play a number of times. So I am pleased to have had the opportunity to produce the lesser-known First Shepherds Play for you this year. This rarely-produced play is less sophisticated in form and structure than its better-known brother, but I hope you will appreciate how charming it is in its own right.

My thanks to the entire team—especially Katherine Belyea and my collaborator, Linda Phillips. And to Madeleine who made my crazy dream of light and spectacle come to life.

Kimberley Radmacher

Sources:
- Davies Gilbert, Some Ancient Christmas Carols, 2nd ed. (1823) (Gilbert)
- William Sands, Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern (1833) (Sands 1833)
- William Sands, Christmastide: Its History, Festivities, and Carols (ca. 1852) (Sands 1852)