

= Magnificat (Rutter) =

The Magnificat by John Rutter is a musical setting of the biblical canticle Magnificat , completed in 1990 . The extended composition in seven movements " for soprano or mezzo @-@ soprano solo , mixed choir , and orchestra (or chamber ensemble) " is based on the Latin text , interspersed with " Of a Rose , a lovely Rose " , an anonymous English poem on Marian themes , the beginning of the Sanctus and a prayer to Mary . The music includes elements of Latin American music .

The composer conducted the first performance in Carnegie Hall on 26 May 1990 , and the first recording with the Cambridge Singers and the City of London Sinfonia . Oxford University Press published Magnificat in 1991 and Of a Rose , a lovely Rose separately in 1998 .

While the canticle Magnificat was often set to music , being a regular part of Catholic vespers and Anglican evensong , Rutter 's work is one of few extended settings , along with Bach 's composition . Critical reception has been mixed , appreciating that the " orchestration is brilliant and very colourful " and " the music weaves a magical spell of balm and peace " , but also experiencing a " virtual encyclopedia of musical clichés , a ? predictable exercise in glitzy populism " .

= = History and text = =

The Magnificat or Song of Mary is one of the three New Testament canticles , the others being Nunc dimittis and Benedictus . Mary sings the song on the occasion of her visit to Elizabeth , as narrated in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1 : 39 ? 56) . It is a daily part in Catholic vesper services and Anglican Evening Prayer .

Rutter followed the tradition of setting it to music , especially the work by Johann Sebastian Bach which also structures the text in movements of different character . Magnificat was composed on a commission by MidAmerica Productions , a concert organisation in New York performing in Carnegie Hall with a choir of about 200 voices selected in the United States . Rutter was inspired by " jubilant celebrations of Mary in Hispanic cultures " and conceived the work as a " bright Latin @-@ flavoured fiesta " . In addition to the liturgical Latin text , he chose a 15th @-@ century poem , which compares Mary to a rose . In the third movement , the beginning of the Sanctus is inserted after the mentioning of " sanctum nomen eius " (his holy name) . The text of the doxology in the last movement is interspersed with a prayer to Mary , " Sancta Maria , succurre miseris " (Holy Mary , help those in need) . Rutter supplied a singing version in English for the complete work .

= = Music and scoring = =

The composer wrote :

The ? Magnificat ? a poetic outpouring of praise , joy and trust in God , ascribed by Luke to the Virgin Mary on learning that she was to give birth to Christ ? has always been one of the most familiar and well @-@ loved of scriptural texts , not least because of its inclusion as a canticle in the Catholic office of Vespers and in Anglican Evensong . Musical settings of it abound , though surprisingly few of them since J.S. Bach 's time give the text extended treatment . I had long wished to write an extended Magnificat , but was not sure how to approach it until I found my starting point in the association of the text with the Virgin Mary . In countries such as Spain , Mexico and Puerto Rico , feast days of the Virgin are joyous opportunities for people to take to the streets and celebrate with singing , dancing and processions . These images of outdoor celebration were , I think , somewhere in my mind as I wrote , though I was not fully conscious of the fact till afterwards . I was conscious of following Bach 's example in adding to the liturgical text ? with the lovely old English poem ' Of a Rose ' and the prayer ' Sancta Maria ' (both of which strengthen the Marian connection) and with the interpolated ' Sanctus ' , sung to the Gregorian chant of the Missa cum júbilo in the third movement . The composition of Magnificat occupied several hectic weeks early in 1990 , and the première took place in May of that year in Carnegie Hall , New York .

Musicologist John Bawden notes that Rutter 's work has several features in common with Bach 's setting : both repeat material of the first movement in the last , use chant melodies , devote " more

reflective verses " to a soloist , and insert additional text , in Bach 's work texts related to Christmas .

Rutter scored the work for a female soloist , soprano or mezzo @-@ soprano , who at times represents Mary , and a mixed choir , usually SATB , but sometimes with divided parts . He offers two versions , for orchestra or chamber ensemble . The orchestra consists of

woodwind : 2 flutes , 2 oboes , 2 clarinets , 2 bassoons

brass : 4 horns , 3 trumpets , 3 trombones , tuba

percussion : timpani , percussion (glockenspiel , snare drum , crash cymbals , suspended cymbal , tambourine , bongos)

strings : harp , strings

The chamber version replaces the brass mostly by the organ and uses only one each of flute , oboe , clarinet and horn . Timpani , percussion and harp are the same as in the orchestra version , and for the strings , a minimum of two first violins , two second violins , two violas , one cello and one double bass required .

= = Movements = =

The following table shows the title , Tempo marking , voices , time , key and text sources for the seven movements . The information is given for the beginning of the movements . Rutter frequently shifts tempo , key and time . The source for the details is the vocal score , unless otherwise noted .

= = = 1 = = =

The work opens with a short instrumental introit in G major , marked " Bright and joyful " , alternating between 3 / 8 and 3 / 4 time . Simple polyrhythms are achieved by dividing the 3 / 4 measure in two for the orchestra and in three for the chorus . While Bach structured the first verses of the canticle in several movements of different scoring , Rutter unites the first three verses in one choral movement , treating the different ideas to different motifs and setting , and repeating the first verse at the end as a recapitulation .

The soprano and alto enter in unison Magnificat anima mea (My soul doth magnify [the Lord]) . The vocal motif of Magnificat leaps up a major sixth and rises even higher . It is repeated several times in different combinations of voices , always in homophony . The second verse , Et exultavit spiritus meus (And my spirit hath rejoiced) , is sung first by soprano and alto in third parallels . The men repeat it similarly and continuo in Deo (in God) , Deo accented by the characteristic figure of a lower mordent , which is repeated throughout the whole work , often when God is mentioned . The conclusion of the idea , in Deo salutari meo (in God my saviour) , is expressed by a descending line , alternating the rhythm , one measure in 3 / 4 , one 6 / 8 , and alternating the women 's voices in sequences . A short recapitulation of Magnificat anima mea marks the end of the second verse .

The beginning of the third verse , Quia respexit humilitatem (For he hath regarded the low estate [of his handmaiden]) , is rendered even simpler : the sequences are repeated in even rhythm , then broadened and coloured by parallel triads . The continuation , Ecce enim (for , behold , [from henceforth ? shall call me blessed]) , builds in similar fashion , with all parts divided , to the climax of the first movement on the word beatam (" blessed " or " happy ") , marked " f dolce " . The text omnes generationes (all generations) is again given in sequences of descending lines , now alternating one measure of 6 / 8 and one of 4 / 4 . While the bass sings the line first , the tenor adds a sequence of sustained notes rising step by step one fifth . In Bach 's treatment of the same text , each entry of a fugue theme is one step , covering an octave in measures 15 to 20 of Omnes generationes.CITEREFBach2014 A repeat of the text and the motifs of verse 1 concludes the movement , ending on Magnificat , without retard , with accents on each syllable and cut short .

= = = 2 = = =

Rutter inserted an anonymous English poem from the 15th century , Of a Rose , a lovely Rose , as

the second movement . Marked " Tranquil and flowing " , it imitates chant singing , with flexible times and in doric mode . The poet imagines Jesus as a rose springing from Mary , comparable to " Es ist ein Ros entsprungen " . She is seen as a rose bush with five branches : the Annunciation , the Star of Bethlehem , the three Kings , the fall of the devil 's power , and heaven . The last stanza asks Mary to ? shield us from the fiendes bond ? . The eight stanzas , in four lines of which three rhyme , are set as variations of an old tune . The short refrain is first sung by the soprano alone , immediately repeated by soprano , alto and tenor , the voices in unison but for triads on " lovely " . It is repeated after the first stanza by soprano and tenor in unison . After the fourth stanza , it appears again , now in three different parts , and a last time before the final prayer , again slightly different . The first stanza (" ... this rose began to spring ... ") is sung by the bass , the second (" ... out of her bosom ... ") by the alto , the third (" ... an angel from heaven 's tower ... ") by two sopranos and alto , the fourth (" ... star shone over Bethlehem ... ") by tenor and bass , the fifth (" ... three kinges ... ") by the bass , the sixth (" ... sprang to hell ... ") by four parts SATB , the seventh (" ... sprang to heaven ... ") by soprano and alto , the final prayer (" Pray we to her ... ") by four parts again but mostly in unison .

== = 3 == =

Quia fecit mihi magna (For he [that is mighty] hath done to me great things) , concentrates on two ideas from the canticle verse . Marked " Andante maestoso " , the choral movement in D major opens with solemn dotted rhythms , features of the French overture . A motif of four measures is repeated three times , interrupted by fanfares . Then it is repeated five times , beginning with only the basses , marked piano , adding the motif in a higher part each time , with two sopranos , and increasing volume and intensity .

The second idea of the verse , Et sanctum nomen eius (And holy is his name) , builds similarly . The alto begins , marked " dolce and tranquillo " (sweet and calm) a melody of ten measures , beginning like the first motif but more flowing . The alto keeps singing sustained notes , while first soprano and tenor sing the melody in a canon one measure apart , then bass and soprano sing it in a canon , one measure apart and the soprano a fifth higher . Finally the sustained notes are sung by the bass , while the other three voices continue the imitation . The movement is closed by a chant @-@ like accompanied Sanctus , taken from the Missa cum júbilo .

== = 4 == =

Et misericordia (And his mercy [is on them that fear him from generation to generation]) is sung by the soprano soloist first , repeated by the choir . A motif alternating a measure of six undulating eighth @-@ notes and a measure of one long note dominates the movement . In a middle section , the chorus continues the material , while the soloist picks up the first Magnificat in text and motif .

== = 5 == =

Fecit potentiam (He hath shewed strength) begins with irregular energetic rhythms . The basses sing a short call which dominates the movement , first marked " pp marcato " . The other voices join from the lowest to the highest , only then is the thought continued in braccio suo [with his arm) . In a process similar to movement 3 , the voices build bass to divided soprano . Dispersit superbos (he hath scattered the proud [in the imagination of their hearts]) is presented in fast 3 / 8 movement , while Deposuit potentes de sede (He hath put down the mighty from their seats) is rendered on a steady monotone beat by bass , then tenor , then alto . In great contrast , the soprano begins softly a rising melody on et exaltavit humiles (and exalted them of low degree) , joined by all other voices .

== = 6 == =

The last movement devoted to the canticle summarizes the rest of the text in *Esurientes* ([He hath filled] the hungry) , sung again by the soloist , supported by continuous eighth @-@ notes in 12 / 8 time in the orchestra and answered by the chorus .

= = = 7 = = =

The composition is closed with the doxology *Gloria Patri* (Glory be to the Father) . The music is based on movement 3 , repeating the dotted rhythm and the building from bass to two sopranos . A prayer addressing Mary interrupts the doxology : *Sancta Maria* , asking " for support of humanity , including the needy , the timid , the clergy , women , and the laity " . It is sung by the soloist on sustained chords in the orchestra . The final *Sicut erat in principio* (As it was in the beginning) , repeats , as often , material from the very beginning of the work , the initial *Magnificat* motif , and the descending lines ending on a mordent on *Amen* .

= = Performance , recording and publishing = =

The first performance , conducted by the composer , was on 26 May 1990 in Carnegie Hall , with soloist Maria Alsatti and the Manhattan Chamber Orchestra . Rutter also conducted a recording with soloist Patricia Forbes , the Cambridge Singers and the City of London Sinfonia . A performance lasts about 40 minutes . Timothy Mangan reviewed the reportedly first performance on the West Coast with the Master Chorale of Orange County conducted by William Hall . He described the piece as a " virtual encyclopedia of musical clichés , a long @-@ winded , tamely tonal , predictable exercise in glitzy populism . " He heard influence of composers such as Aaron Copland , Igor Stravinsky and Vaughan Williams .

The work was published by Oxford University Press in 1991 . The composer provided an optional English singable version of the Latin parts . *Of a Rose* , a lovely Rose was published individually in 1998 .

A reviewer notes that Rutter " emphasises the joy experienced by a ? soon to be mother " , with " a good balance between the extrovert and intimate " , and singable melodies with an understanding for the voice . He ends : " The orchestration is brilliant and very colourful , with lots of trumpet fanfares complementing the festive spirit of the music . " Nick Barnard , reviewing a 2006 recording of the chamber version with the Choirs of St. Albans Cathedral conducted by Andrew Lucas , summarizes that " the faster dynamic sections rely too heavily on formulaic use of ostinato rhythms and Rutter fingerprint instrumental colours . Set against this many of the lyrical passages are amongst his finest . " More specifically he notes that in the *Esurientes* " the music weaves a magical spell of balm and peace ? for me the highlight of the entire disc and one of Rutter 's moments of greatest inspiration in any work . "