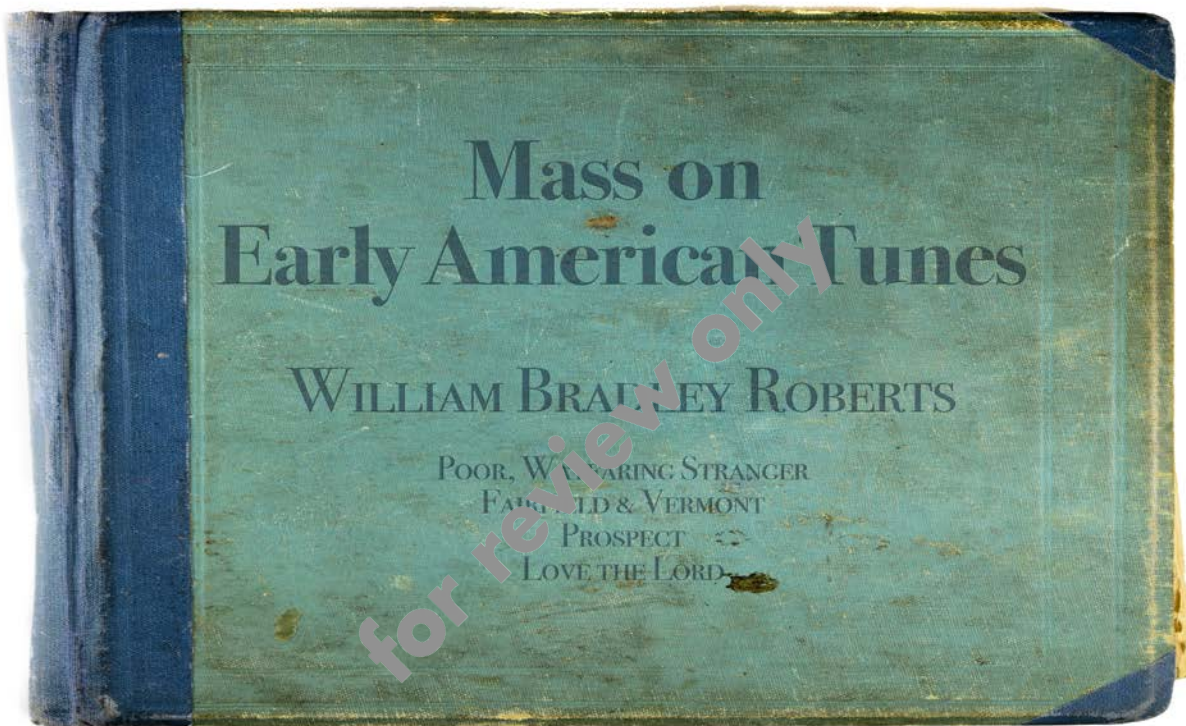


410-936 Mass on Early American Tunes
Choir/congregation, kybd.

William Bradley Roberts

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Mass on Early American Tunes

WILLIAM BRADLEY ROBERTS

When approached by the Very Rev. Ian S. Markham, President of Virginia Theological Seminary, and the Rev. Dr. J. Barney Hawkins IV, Vice President for Development at VTS about composing a mass for the bicentennial of the school, I was still on faculty there. Subsequent retirement offered abundant time for writing and composing, and so I resolved to spend as long as necessary on the project. Early in the process I felt led to base the composition on early American hymn tunes from the shape note tradition. This seemed appropriate since these tunes are roughly contemporaneous with the founding of the Seminary. Indeed, some of them might well have been sung in the first chapel on campus. Others followed in the immediate decades after the school's founding. This historical resonance seemed exactly right, because it linked the celebration of the 200th year with the history of the country, particularly the American South where these tunes predominated. I consulted *The Sacred Harp*, the most famous of the shape note hymnals, as well as *Southern Harmony*, *Kentucky Harmony*, and *Virginia Harmony*. It was a challenge to find metrical tunes that would work with the prose texts of the Mass; the tunes follow poetic meters, having, therefore, an adopted number of syllables per line, while the text of the Mass (though poetic in a general sense) is written in a free, prose style.

Though the harmonic palette of this Mass is modern (mildly so), I decided to incorporate certain aspects of shape note hymnody. These tunes have rather quirky personalities, often breaking the traditional rules of harmony and voice leading. As frequently happens, the slight oddities of the hymns' compositional style have become much beloved by shape note singers and musicologists alike. No one today would dare "correct" these hymn tunes, because, like an antique Persian carpet with worn places, we have come to value the oddities. For example, "parallel fifths"—moving from a fifth interval to another fifth interval—are forbidden in conventional harmony, but are frequent in shape note tunes. Likewise, "open fifths"—chords in which there is no third—have been eschewed since the time of Bach, but are prevalent in these old American tunes. The current Mass setting contains both parallel fifths and open fifths in homage to the style of the original hymns.

Folk music—by definition, tunes in which 1.) the composer is unknown, and 2.) the tune is subject to modification as it is handed down—is usually memorable and easy to sing. These hymn tunes have the nature of folk music of the U.S., even though we know some of the composers. In other cases, we know merely the last name of the composer, but nothing else about that person. Arguably the most famous tune in the Mass is POOR, WAYFARING STRANGER about whose origins we know little. The tune names are shown on each movement of the Mass, so that those who wish can return to the source material.

Congregational music must be singable by average singers, not perhaps on the first try, but at least after a few repetitions. Most shape note tunes were designed to be sung by average singers, who were trained to read the music not by the position of notes on the staff, but instead by the shape of the notehead, which could be square, round, triangular, or diamond shaped. To this day, especially in the American South, there are "Singin's," where people gather for "all day singing and dinner on the grounds" ("dinner" being the noon meal in southern tradition). We know that these tunes are successful and beloved, so that incorporating them into the Mass might make for confident, exuberant singing. The melodies have been slightly altered only when necessary to accommodate the texts, but in the end are largely faithful to the original tunes.

This prayer accompanies the introduction of *Mass on Early American Tunes*: that it might enrich the worship of God's people, causing them to sing fervently to their Maker.

—WBR, Richmond, July 2022

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*Commissioned by Virginia Theological Seminary (Episcopal)
for the 200th Anniversary of its Founding in 1823*

Kyrie

Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have
mer-cy, Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy, Christ, have
mer-cy, Christ, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have
rit.
mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy.

Music: William Bradley Roberts, based on POOR, WAYFARING STRANGER, anon. Early American melody, 19th cent.
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Sanctus

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly
Lord, God of pow'r, of pow'r and
might, heav'n and earth are full of your
glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high -
est. Bless'd is he who comes in the name of the
rall.
Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Music: William Bradley Roberts, based on PROSPECT, 1835, by Graham. © 2022 Selah Publishing Co., Inc.

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Gloria

Glo - ry to God in the
high - est, and peace to his peo-ple on earth. Lord God, — heav'n-ly —
King, — al - might-y — God and Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we
give you thanks, we praise you for — your glo - ry. Lord — Je - sus
Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord, — God, —
Lamb of — God, you take a - way the sin of the world: have mer - cy
on — us, — have — mer - cy on — us; you are —
seat - ed at the — right hand — of — the Fa - ther: re -
ceive — our — prayer, — re - ceive — our — prayer. For
you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone — are the Lord, you a -
lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ with the Ho - ly Spir - it, in the
glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - - - - men. —

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Agnus Dei

Je - sus, Lamb of God: have mer-cy,
have mer - cy on us. Je - sus, bear - er of our sins:
have mer - cy on us. Je - sus re - deem - er
of the world: give us your peace; Je - sus re -
deem - er of the world: give us your peace.

Music: William Bradley Roberts, based on LOVE THE LORD, 1859, by J.P. Reese. © 2022 Selah Publishing Co., Inc.

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Kyrie

William Bradley Roberts, based on POOR, WAYFARING STRANGER
anon. Early American melody, 19th cent.

♩ = 66

Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have

mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy, Christ, have mer - cy, Christ, have

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Musical score for measures 8-11. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: "mer - cy, Christ, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a complex rhythmic pattern with changing time signatures: 2/4, 4/4, and 3/4.

Musical score for measures 12-15. The vocal line (treble clef) has lyrics: "mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy." with a fermata over the final note. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) includes a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. The time signatures continue to change: 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4.

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Gloria

William Bradley Roberts, based on FAIRFIELD, 1791, by Hitchcock
and VERMONT, 1778, by William Billings

$\text{♩} = 60$

Glo -

ry to God in the high - est, and peace to his peo-ple on earth. Lord

God, heav'n-ly King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we

Ped.

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9

13
wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for — your — glo - ry.

17
Lord — Je - sus Christ, — on - ly Son of the Fa - ther,

21
Lord, — God, — Lamb — of — God, you take a - way — the sin of the world: have

25
mer - cy on — us, — have — mer - cy on — us;

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10

29

you are— seat - ed at the— right hand— of— the Fa - ther: re -

ceive — our — prayer, — re - ceive — our — prayer. For

33

37

you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone — are — the Lord, — you a -

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11

41

lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ with the Ho - ly Spir - it, in the

Ped.

45

glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - - - men.

Choir
A - - - men.

rall.

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12

Sanctus

William Bradley Roberts, based on PROSPECT, 1835, by Graham

$\text{♩} = 80$

Ho - - - - ly, —

4
ho - ly, — ho - ly — Lord, God — of —

8
pow'r, of — pow'r and might, heav'n — and —

The musical score consists of three systems. Each system has a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 80. The lyrics are: 'Ho - - - - ly, —', '4 ho - ly, — ho - ly — Lord, God — of —', and '8 pow'r, of — pow'r and might, heav'n — and —'. A large diagonal watermark 'FOR REVIEW ONLY' is overlaid on the piano accompaniment.

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13

12

earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -

15

san - na in the high - - -

18

est. Bless'd is he who comes in the

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14

21 Descant

Ho - san - na, Ho -

name of the Lord. Ho - san - - - na

24 *rall.*

san - na in the high - - - - - est.

rall.

in the high - - - - - est.

rall.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 21-23) includes a vocal line with lyrics 'Ho - san - na, Ho -' and a piano accompaniment. A 'Descant' is indicated above the vocal line. The second system (measures 24-25) includes a vocal line with lyrics 'name of the Lord. Ho - san - - - na' and a piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 26-27) includes a vocal line with lyrics 'san - na in the high - - - - - est.' and a piano accompaniment. The tempo marking 'rall.' is placed above the vocal line in measures 24 and 26. The piano accompaniment consists of a right-hand melody and a left-hand bass line.

Agnus Dei

15

William Bradley Roberts, based on LOVE THE LORD, 1859, by J.P. Reese

$\text{♩} = 48$

Je - - - sus,

Lamb of God: have mer - cy, have mer - cy on us.

Je - - - sus, bear - er of our sins: have mer - cy

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21

on — us. Je - sus re - deem - er of the

27

world: — give us your peace; Je - sus re -

33

Descant *p poco rit.*

give — us — your peace. —

p poco rit.

deem - er of the world: — give — us your peace. —

poco rit.