

VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST



a Motet for Mixed Choir (SATB)

Phillip A. Cooke

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(2009)

PERFORMANCE NOTE

Breath marks are suggestions only.

The solo alto sections can either be taken by two members of the choir situated within the main body of the choir, or placed off stage for distant effect.

For Amelia, born 27 July 2009

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Duration: 5 minutes

Cover picture: 'Candles in a church' (Arne Kuilman)

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TEXT

Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.
Cuius gloriam vidimus quasi unigeniti a Patre,
plenum gratie et veritatis. In principio erat verbum
et verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat verbum.
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.

*The word became flesh and lived among us.
Whose glory we saw as of the only-begotten of the Father
Full of grace and truth. In the beginning was the word
and the word was with God and God was the word.
Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

Christmas Responsory: St John 1:14

PROGRAMME NOTE

Some theologians consider the opening verses to the *Gospel of John* among the most profound doctrinal statements in the Christian scriptures. "In the beginning was the Word..." relates back to the Creation story at the beginning of *Genesis*, as well as the Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) through which all of creation passed. Yet the *Gospel* verse does not end there; it proceeds to the holy mystery of the Incarnation: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory - glory like the only-begotten of the Father, full of glory and truth." (*John 1:14*). That Word, the *Gospel* writer tells, not only was a motive force in the Creation of the Universe, the same being on human flesh and came to live among us.

The famous text from the "prologue" to John's *Gospel* appears only once in its complete form during the Catholic Church's annual progress through the chanted liturgy, but it comes at a very special moment: the night before Christmas. The Church practices discipline, self-reflection, and penitence for 40 days before the two highest holy days, Easter and Christmas. The 40 days of Advent prepare each individual to receive the coming of the Christ child, which is celebrated on 25 December. In the middle of the night, the long waiting is ended, and a long service of worship celebrates the various stories of the first Christmas; the nocturnal liturgy culminates in the Midnight Mass, which is the complete celebration of the Child's taking on our flesh. And one of the last chants sung before the Mass begins is *Verbum caro factum est*.

My setting of *Verbum caro factum est* takes the atmosphere and sense of anticipation in the Midnight Mass as the basis for a slow, reverential meditation on these profound words. The work is largely homophonic, ebbing and flowing with the rhythm of the text; more animated and strident sections are present, but soon dissolve into the *tranquillo e sostenuto* material. One major departure from the original text is the use of the macaronic form, where the original Latin words are combined with fragments of the same text in English translation. This way of approaching traditional texts is something that I have used in recent pieces and gives a fresh approach to well known texts. The English translation is only ever sung by two solo altos (which can be placed off stage) which contrast with the main choir who sing the Latin original.

PAC

VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST

CHRISTMAS RESPONSORY:
ST. JOHN 1:14

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Liberamente (senza misura) (♩ = c.80)

rit. - - - - -

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

*Soli** **pp** *sempre, lontano*

poco

The word. The word. The word. The word. The word be - came flesh.

* see preface for performace details

A

Lento: tranquillo e sostenuto (♩ = c.90)

2

pp *espress.*

poco

sub. p

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est. Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro

pp *espress.*

Tutti* *poco*

sub. p

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro

pp *espress.*

poco

sub. p

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro

pp *espress.*

poco

sub. p

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro

pp

poco

sub. p

allargando - - - - -

2

7

fac - tum est et hab - i - ta - vit in no - bis in

fac - tum est et hab - i - ta - vit in no - bis in

fac - tum est et hab - i - ta - vit in no - bis in

fac - tum est et hab - i - ta - vit in no - bis in

Liberamente (♩=c.80)

rit. - - - - -

11

no - bis.

no - bis. The word. The word. The word be - came flesh.

no - bis.

no - bis.

no - bis.

B

come prima (♩ = c.90)

3

13 *pp* *espress.* *poco*

Cu - ius glor - i - am vi - di - mus Cu - ius glor - i - am vi - di - mus

pp *espress.* Tutti *poco*

Cu - ius glor - i - am vi - di - mus Cu - ius glor - i - am vi - di - mus

pp *espress.* *poco*

Cu - ius glor - i - am vi - di - mus Cu - ius glor - i - am vi - di - mus

pp *espress.* *poco*

Cu - ius glor - i - am vi - di - mus Cu - ius glor - i - am vi - di - mus

pp *poco*

17 *sub. p* *mp* *p* *f* *appass.* *rit.*

qua - si un - i - gen - it - i a Pat - re plen - um gra - tie et

sub. p *mp* *p* *f* *appass.*

qua - si un - i - gen - it - i a Pat - re plen - um gra - tie et

sub. p *mp* *p* *f* *appass.*

qua - si un - i - gen - it - i a Pat - re plen - um gra - tie et

sub. p *mp* *p* *f* *appass.*

qua - si - un - i - gen - it - i a Pat - re plen - um gra - tie et

sub. p *mp* *p* *f* *appass.*

pochiss. accel. - - - - - A tempo

28 *sub. mf* *p* *sub. mf* *ff appass.*

er - at ver - bum ver - bum er - at ap - ud De - um et De - us_____

sub. mf *p* *sub. mf* *ff appass.*

er - at ver - bum ver - bum er - at ap - ud De - um et De - us_____

mf *ff appass.*

ver - bum er - at ap - ud De - um et De - us_____

mf *ff appass.*

ver - bum er - at ap - ud De - um et De - us_____

sub. mf *p* *mf* *ff appass.*

rit. - - - - - Liberamente (♩=c.80)

32 *sub. pp espress.*

er - at ver - bum. _____

sub. pp espress. *Soli pp sempre, lontano* *poco*

er - at ver - bum. _____ The word. The word. The word be - came flesh_____

sub. pp espress.

er - at ver - bum. _____

sub. pp espress.

er - at ver - bum. _____

sub. pp

Lento: tranquillo e sostenuto (♩ = c.90)

rit. - - - - -

35 *pp* *espress.* *poco* *sub. p*

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro

pp *espress.* Tutti *poco* *sub. p*

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro

pp *espress.* *poco* *sub. p*

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro

pp *espress.* *poco* *sub. p*

Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro fac - tum est Ver - bum ca - ro

pp *poco* *sub. p*

Devotissimo, tranquillissimo (♩ = c.60)

40 *mp* *pp* *lunga* *pp* *sempre*

fac - tum est Glor - i - a Pat - ri et Fil - i - o et

mp *pp* *lunga* *pp* *sempre*

fac - tum est Glor - i - a Pat - ri et Fil - i - o et

mp *pp* *lunga* *pp* *sempre*

fac - tum est Glor - i - a Pat - ri et Fil - i - o et

mp *pp* *lunga* *pp* *sempre*

fac - tum est Glor - i - a Pat - ri et Fil - i - o et

mp *pp* *lunga* *pp* *sempre*

fac - tum est Glor - i - a Pat - ri et Fil - i - o et

45

Spir - i - tu - i Sanc - to. Sanc - to.

Spir - i - tu - i Sanc - to. Sanc - to. The word. The word.

Spir - i - tu - i Sanc - to. Sanc - to.

Spir - i - tu - i Sanc - to. Sanc - to.

Spir - i - tu - i Sanc - to. Sanc - to.

Spir - i - tu - i Sanc - to. Sanc - to.

ppp

Soli pp sempre, lontano

rit. al fine. - - - - -

48

The word. The word. The word. The word. The word. The word. The

dim. al fine.

48

word. The word. The word.

lunga