



*An Advent
wrapped in Love.*

The Gift of Music

By Nathan Stowe

Veni, Veni Emmanuel! Captivum Solve Israel! This plaintive cry sets the somber, and almost haunting, mood for the hymn we now know as O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Definitely traced back to Germany in the year 1710 with many sources claiming the text dates back to the 12th, 11th, or even 8th century, this song is one of the oldest known Christmas compositions.

Through the course of each stanza the writer alternates between lamenting pleas for aid and rejoicing in the promised coming of a savior, one who shall be called Emmanuel. These supplications are as old as humanity itself. Just as our ancestors of old, we call upon the Lord to save us from our current troubles while glorifying the most precious gift of his only begotten son. All of this is elegantly presented in musical form, lending to the text an even deeper impact than just the words alone.

While this may be one of the oldest surviving hymns of the modern era, scripture is filled with many texts that were originally set to song. Alas, the music that accompanied these texts has been lost to time. Still, from the multitude of small verses tucked away throughout the scriptures, to the entirety of the book of Psalms, it is clear that people have been worshiping God through music for millennia.

It is through this lens of musical worship that I



experience the Christmas season. With both of my parents being professional musicians, it was inevitable that my earliest Christmas memories would be accompanied by music. In many ways, this was the best gift of the Christmas season. Not just the performances but the rehearsals, time spent before and after

services working with choir directors and other members of the music ministry, and of course many many hours of practice. Through these actions I witnessed how as Christians we can give of our time and talents in a way that glorifies the Lord, blesses those who hear, and blesses ourselves. I find that this is the true beauty of the gift of music. It is a gift both for the recipient and the performer, it can be given as an individual or as part of a collective effort where many lend their unique talents, it can even overcome barriers of language or culture.

For these reasons, and many more, I cherish music as one of the most profound gifts given.

Scripture Reading Psalm 150:1-6

*Prayer: Oh come, ye great composer of all life
And save from the cacophony of strife
You've blessed us with the anthems of old
To heavenly psalms we shall one day behold
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

