

And I, Joseph

Carol for SATB (with divisions) and organ

winner of the Bach Choir Sir David Willcocks Carol Competition 2023

Nicholas Ansdell-Evans

And I, Joseph

'And Joseph went out to find a midwife in the country of Bethlehem' (*James Pr.-ev. 18 v. 1*)

This carol is about the moment of Jesus's birth and about how God comes to us in stillness.

The text is taken from the Protogospel (infancy gospel) of James. This is a 2nd century document which, beginning with the birth of Mary, recounts events before, during and after the birth of Christ.

Joseph is travelling to Bethlehem for the census with Mary and his two sons by his first marriage. They have almost arrived when Mary says she is about to give birth. Joseph, afraid in case his relations in Bethlehem see Mary, leaves her with his sons in a cave, and goes out to find a midwife. While he is walking, he sees everything suddenly come to a complete halt, and for an instant the entire world is motionless: the birds are at a standstill unmoving in the sky, some men who are eating have hands poised in mid-air, a flowing stream halts. Then everything continues as before. Joseph realises that in this moment the birth has taken place, and that for a second he has slipped into eternity.

Rowan Williams discusses this passage in his book *Silence and Honey Cakes* (p.111).

In this setting, throughout the carol Joseph hears his name being called, as if by Mary or by an angel.

And I, Joseph, was walking, and I stood still,
And I looked up to the pole of heaven, but it did not move,
And I looked up to the sky above, and the sky was amazed,
And the birds of heaven hung motionless on the wing.

And I looked on the earth and saw labourers sitting at a meal,
And they were lifting their food from the dish, and their hands did not move,
And they were eating and were not eating, and they were tasting and were not tasting,
But all faces gazed silently at the sky.

And I looked and saw sheep walking, and the sheep stood still,
And I saw a shepherd smiting them with his staff, and his hand stuck fast,
And I looked at the flowing river and saw the goats with their lips on the water,
And they did not drink, and the stream did not flow.

For all things in amazement were halted in their course.

James Protoevangelium ch. 18 (composer's own translation)

And I, Joseph

Nicholas Ansdell-Evans

moderato:

with mystery and wonderment
(in minims)

accel.

a tempo

Soprano: ah

Alto: ah And I

Tenor: ah

Bass: ah

Organ: man.

Dynamic markings: *pp*, *cresc.*, *f*, *pp dolce legato*

Tempo markings: **accel.**, **a tempo**

Performance instructions: *pp*, *cresc.*, *f*, *pp dolce legato*

Soprano: Jo - seph!

Alto: Jo-seph was walking and I stood still, And I looked up to the pole of

Organ: (man.)

Dynamic markings: *pp*, *ppp*

Tempo markings: **accel.**, **a tempo**

Performance instructions: *pp*, *ppp*

11

S *pp* 2. Jo - seph!_____

A hea-ven but it did not move, *mp* And I looked up to the sky a -

T

B

O

15

S 1. *mp* 2. Jo - seph!_____

A *divisi* *con anima* *3* *3* *unis. p calmo* And the birds of hea - ven hung _____

T

B

O *mp* *p*

19

S *pp* 1. **more flowing**
Jo - seph! —

A *pp* 3
mo - tion - less on the wing.

T

B *p dolce* 3
And — I looked on the earth and saw —

O **more flowing** *legato sempre*
pp *p*
Ped.

24

S *p* unis.
Jo - seph!

A *p*
Jo seph! —

T *p* 3
And they were lift - ing their food from the

B *p* 3
la - bourers sit - ting at a meal, — And they were lift - ing their food from the

O *p*
Ped.

S *p* *pp*
Jo - seph! ah -

A *p*
Jo - seph! —

T *mf*
dish_ and their hands did not move, And they were eat-ing and were not

B *mf*
dish_ and their hands did not move, And they were eat-ing and were not

O *Gr.*

32 *cresc.* **growing and moving forward**
S But all fa - ces_ gazed si-lent-ly_ at the

A *pp* *cresc.* **growing and moving forward**
ah - - - - - But all fa - ces_ gazed si-lent-ly_ at the

T *cresc.* **growing and moving forward**
eat-ing, And they were tast-ing and were not tast-ing, But all fa - ces_ gazed si-lent-ly_ at the

B *cresc.* **growing and moving forward**
eat-ing, And they were tast-ing_ and were not tast-ing, But all fa - ces_ gazed si-lent-ly_ at the

O *add*

37 **with flowing movement**

S sky. And I looked and saw sheep walk-ing and the sheep stood

A sky. And I looked and saw sheep walk-ing and the sheep stood

T sky. Jo-seph! Jo-seph!

B sky. Jo-seph! Jo-seph!

with flowing movement

O *mf* *f* (warm tone) (sustain slightly)

41 *mf* *mf* *f* *f*

S still, Jo - seph! Jo - seph!

A still, Jo - seph! Jo - seph!

T And I saw a shep-herd smit-ing them with his staff and his hand stuck

B And I saw a shep-herd smit-ing them with his staff and his hand stuck

O

6 44 **increasingly animated (until bar 52)**

S *p* Jo - seph!

A *mf* And I looked at the flow - ing riv - er, and saw the *cresc.*

T fast, *p* Jo - seph!

B fast, *mf* and saw the

O *p* box closed *Sw.* add to *Sw.* *cresc. poco a poco*

S *mf* Jo - seph! *f* And they did not drink,

A goats with their lips on the wa - ter, *f* And they did not drink,

T *mf* Jo - seph! *f* Jo -

B goats with their lips on the wa - ter, *f* Jo -

O *Gr.* (add)

steadier

50

S And the stream did not flow, For all things in a -

A And the stream did not flow, For all things

T - seph! Jo - seph! For all things

B - seph! Jo - seph! For all things in a -

O Ideally this passage should be unaccompanied

(man.)

slowing

54

S maze - ment, for all things in a - maze - ment were halt - ed,

A in a - maze - ment, all things in a - maze - ment were halt - ed,

T in a - maze - ment, all things in a - maze - ment were halt - ed,

B maze - ment, all things in a - maze - ment were halt - ed,

O *dim.* **p**

(man.)

Quite slow (slower and more distant than the opening)

58 *mp* *dim.* *pp*

S halt - ed, halt - ed in their course.

A halt - ed, halt - ed in their course. *unis. dim.* *pp*

T halt - ed, halt - ed in their course. *unis. dim.* *pp*

B halt - ed, halt - ed in their course. *dim.* *pp* *pp sempre* (hum)

O *pp* *pppp*

Quite slow (slower and more distant than the opening)

63 *pp sempre* (semi-chorus ad lib.) *pp*

S (hum) Jo- seph!_

A *pp sempre* (hum)

T *pp sempre* (hum)

B

O *ppp*