

From Heaven Above To Earth I Come

Description:

An arrangement of a German Christmas hymn for unison voices and piano.

Methods/Techniques:

I was commissioned to find a German Christmas and set it for a congregation to sing. I selected VOM HIMMEL HOCH because it has been called "The most popular German carol before Gruber's Silent Night"¹ I combined the four vocal parts into a piano accompaniment, and selected four verses out of the original 15. Traditionally the first five verses were sung by a soloist, and the remaining verses by the congregation.² The first two verses in this setting are from the first five, so I plan to sing them as a solo to introduce the hymn to a modern congregation that is not in the Lutheran tradition. I plan for verses three and four to be sung by the congregation.

Materials:

Both the words and music were written by Martin Luther. It was first published in the 1539 *Geistliche Lieder* by Valten Schumann in Leipzig. Since the earlier version of the hymnal was published in 1529 without this hymn, we know that it was written between 1529 and 1539.³

The melody was also arranged by J.S. Bach as "Canonic Variations on Vom Himmel hoch (BWV 769)"⁴

1 Smith, Timothy A. "Vom Himmel Hoch." *Sojourn*. Web. 10 Sept. 2014. <<http://www2.nau.edu/tas3/himmel.html>>.

2 "From Heaven Above To Earth I Come." *Open Hymnal Project*. Web. 10 Sept. 2014. <http://openhymnal.org/Lyrics/From_Heaven_Above-Vom_Himmel_Hoch.html>.

3 "Early German Lutheran and Reformation Hymnals." *The Hymns and Carols of Christmas*. Web. 11 Sept. 2014. <http://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/History/early_german_hymnals.htm>.

4 Smith, Timothy A. "Vom Himmel Hoch." *Sojourn*. Web. 10 Sept. 2014. <<http://www2.nau.edu/tas3/himmel.html>>.