

Music Blurbs for 12-22-19

News & Notes

This week we'll sing "People, look East," "Soon and very soon," and "Lo how a Rose e'er blooming." And in our *blast from the past* category we'll be singing "Joseph dearest, Joseph mine" from the 1940 *Hymnal*. The choir will sing an old English confection "The Cherry Tree Carol," and there will be organ music by Brahms and Guilmant.

Bulletins

Today's hymn, "Lo! how a Rose e'er blooming" is a German carol that first appeared in an Episcopal hymnal in its 1940 edition. The text, alluding to the imagery of the coming savior springing from the "root of Jesse," harkens to the prophetic text of Isaiah 11:1-10. Hymn texts using this imagery date back as far as the eighth century. The earliest known source for this text though is "Trier" in the late fourteenth century. As it appeared in the *Alte Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesang* (Cologne 1599) it had 23 verses. What the 1599 edition also included was the tune that we still sing today, supposedly a Rhineland carol tune. Michael Praetorius, a prolific composer of late sixteenth century Germany, provided the harmonization that we still use today.

Brahms, composing in the latter half of the nineteenth century, saw himself as part of the stream of German musical tradition. At the end of his life, he followed in the footsteps of Bach and many other German composers by writing a collection of chorale preludes based on German hymns. His treatment of "Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen" is in the form of an ornamented chorale. In this case, the ornamentation of the melodic line is so dense as to make the tune unrecognizable and for all intents and purposes creates a whole new melody.