

PROGRAM NOTES

When Robert Bode, Artistic Director of Choral Arts Northwest, asked me to compose a piece for their annual Christmas concert in 2016, he suggested several texts, including the beautiful poem by Christina Rossetti titled “Love Came Down at Christmas.” I was excited about using this text because, to me, it focuses on the beauty of love and peace that can be found in the wondrous mystery of Christ’s birth. I evoke this sense of mystery and beauty through my synesthesia—the association of colors with notes, timbres, and words—by focusing on two elements. The first element—the bright light from the star and angels shining down on the manger—is represented by the upper voices descending into clustered chords of light on the words “love came down.” The second element is a melody, initially sung by the tenors, that has a gentle, rocking motion—like that of a lullaby—representing Jesus’ mother Mary holding and rocking her child to sleep. These two themes weave together throughout the piece and finally coalesce to express the brightness of the sign that is signaled by the star and angels, as the upper voices sing the words “love divine,” painting colors of gold and white light illuminating the peaceful manger scene.

—Jessica French

TEXT

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine;
Worship we our Jesus:
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

—Christina Rossetti
(1830–1894)

Jessica French (b. 1984)

For biographical information visit:
www.jessicafrench.net

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*Commissioned by Choral Arts Northwest—Robert Bode, Artistic Director—
with gratitude for their friendship and superb musical artistry*

Love Came Down at Christmas

for SATB Chorus (divisi) unaccompanied

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

Jessica French (ASCAP)

Misterioso con teneramente ♩ = 48

Soprano

Alto 1

Alto 2

Tenor

Bass

Keyboard
(for
rehearsal
only)

Misterioso con teneramente ♩ = 48

4 *p*

S oo Love came

A 1 Love came

A 2 *mp* Love came

T *p* Love,

oo Love came

Love came

Love came

Love,

8 *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

down. Love came down,

mp *p* *mp* *p*

down, Love came down,

down, Love came down,

down, Love came down,

11 *stagger breathing*

S 1

oo

A 1

oo

T

mp

Love — came down — at Christ - mas,



14

S 1

A 1

T

mf

Love all love - ly, Love Di-vine; Love _ was born _ at Christ - mas,



18 *mp*

S 1

A 1

A 2 *p*

T *mp* *mf*

Star and An - gels gave the sign, Star and An - gels gave the



22 *p*

S Love came down, - Love came down, -

A 1 *p* *mf*

A 2 *p* *mf*

T *p* *mf*

sign. Love came down, -

B *mp* *mf*

Love came down, - Love came down, -



27 *mf* *unis.*

S Love _ came down at Christ - mas, Love all love - ly, Love Di - vine;

A Love came down at Christ - mas, _ Love love - ly, Love Di - vine; _

T Love came down at Christ - mas, _ Love all love - ly, Love Di - vine;

B Love came down at Christ - mas, Love love - ly, Love Di - vine;

31 *f* *mp*

S Love _ was born at Christ - mas, Star and An - gels gave _ the sign,

A Love was born at Christ - mas, _ Star and An - gels gave the sign,

T Love was born at Christ - mas, _ Star _ gave the sign, _

B Love was born at Christ - mas, Star and An - gels gave the sign,

35 *mf* *mp*

Star and An - gels gave the sign.

Star and An - gels gave the sign.

Star An - gels gave the sign.

Star An - gels gave the sign.

Star An - gels gave the sign.

38 *p* *p* *mp*

S *oo*

A *oo*

T Wor - ship we the God - head, Love In - car - nate, Love Di - vine;

42 *stagger breathing* *mf*

S 1
ah

S 2
stagger breathing *mf*
ah

A
stagger breathing *mf*
ah

T
8 Wor - ship we our Je - sus: But where - with for

B
mp *mf* *mp* *mf*
Wor - ship we our Je - sus: But where - with for

45 *mp*

mp

mp

mp *mf* *mp*

sa - cred sign, But where - with for sa - cred

mp

sa - cred sign, But where - with for sa - cred

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48

S 1 *mf*
But where - with _ for sa - cred sign, sign, _____

S 2 *mf*
But where - with _ for sa - cred sign, sign, sa - cred sign, _____

A 1 *mp*
But where - with for sa - cred, But where - with _ for sa - cred

A 2 *mp*
But where - with _ for sa - cred sign? But where - with _ for sa - cred

T
sign, But where - with _ for sa - cred

B
sign, sa - cred sign, sa - cred

52

f

sign? _____

f

sa - cred sign? _____

mf *f*

sign, But where - with for sa - cred sign, sa - cred sign? _____

mf *f*

sign, But _ where - with for sa - cred sign? _____

mf *f*

sign, But where - with for sa - cred sign, sa - cred sign? _____

mf *f*

sign, _____ sa - cred sign? _____

Soprano solo or three sopranos *f joyfully* *stagger breathing*

56 Desc. Love _ shall be _ our to - ken, _ ah

S *f joyfully* Love _ shall be _ our to - ken, Love be yours and love be mine,

A 1 *mf joyfully* *stagger breathing* Love shall be our to - ken, _ Love be yours and love be mine, _

A 2 *mf joyfully* Love shall be our to - ken, Love be yours and love be mine,

T *f joyfully* Love _ shall be _ our to - ken, Love be yours and love be mine,

B *mf joyfully* Love be our to - ken, Love be yours and love be mine,

* Descant notes are cue-sized in the keyboard reduction.

* Descant notes are cue-sized in the keyboard reduction.

60 *ff*

Love _ to God _ and all _ men, Love for plea _ and gift _ and sign,

Love to God _ and all men, _ Love for plea _ and gift and sign,

Love to God and all men, Love for plea and gift and sign,

Love _ to God _ and all _ men, Love for plea _ and gift and sign,

Love to God and all men, Love for plea gift and sign,

ff

64

Desc.

Love came down,

S 1

Love _ for plea _ and gift ____ and sign. Love came down,

S 2

Love _ for plea _ and gift ____ and sign. Love came down,

A 1

Love for plea _ and gift ____ and sign. Love came down,

A 2

Love for plea and gift ____ and sign. Love came down,

T

8 Love _ for plea _ and gift ____ and sign. Love came

B

Love ____ and gift ____ and Love ____ came down

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68

S 1 *p*
Love came down, ah

S 2 *mp*
Love came down, Love _ came down at Christ - mas,

A 1 *p*
Love came down, ah

A 2 *p* *mp*
Love _ came down, ah Love _ came down at

T
8 down,

B
Love _ came down,

72

ah _____ ah _____

Love _ came down _ at Christ - mas, Love _ came down _ at

ah _____ ah _____

Christ - mas, Love _ came down _ at Christ - mas,

Love _ came down _ at Christ - mas, Love _ came down _ at

Love _ came down _ at Christ - mas,

Love _ came down _ at Christ - mas,

molto rit. al fine

75 *mf*

S 1 Love all love - ly, Love Di -

S 2 *mf* Christ - mas, Love all love ly, Love Di -

A 1 *mf* Love all love - ly, Love Di -

A 2 *mf* Love _ came down _ at Christ - mas, Love Di -

T *mf* 8 Christ mas, Love all love ly, Love _ Di -

B *mf* Love _ came down _ at Christ - mas, Love Di -

molto rit. al fine

78 *mp* *p*

Desc. vine, Love Di - vine.

S 1 *mp* *p*
vine.

S 2 *mp* *p*
vine.

A 1 *mp* *p*
vine.

A 2 *mp* *p*
vine.

T *mp* *p*
vine.

B *mp* *p*
vine.

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