

Rejoice in the Lord Always

A new edition by Nigel Williams, 2015

The setting of Rejoice in the Lord always in the Mulliner Book is justly popular. There are some admirable performing editions but there remain some respects in which they could be improved.

Sources

One source is pre-eminent. Thomas Mulliner's manuscript collection of mostly organ works. A wonderful digital facsimile has been made available by the British Library.

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_30513_f069v

Their viewer allows for navigation to other pages. Mulliner wrote in the title and a later hand added an outline of the remaining words.

The manuscript was used by John Hawkins in the late eighteenth preparing the edition in "A General History of the Science and Practice of Music", volume 5 page 458.

<http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/a/a9/IMSLP337343-PMLP544570-generalhistoryof05hawk.pdf>

Hawkins' edition is the first known to attempt to match the notes to the translation of Philippians 4.4-7 in the 1549 Prayer Book. Other sources derive ultimately from these.

Authorship

Strictly, the work long attributed to John Redford is anonymous. There are a few candidates that are interesting to consider.

Redford

Redford himself was composer of many works in the Mulliner Book, including the one immediately prior to Rejoice in the Lord. It is a strong reason against his authorship that Mulliner should ascribe other works but not this one. Nevertheless it is a possibility. More probable is that the composer was someone in Redford's circle.

It has been suggested by some editors that Redford could not have known the text adopted in the 1549 Prayer Book. That inference depends on rejecting the earlier version written in the Mulliner Book itself. As discussed later, the case for rejecting the version in the manuscript is far from proven.

Mulliner or Heywood

Mulliner notated and ascribed a great many works by numerous composers, some of whom are little known outside this manuscript. If a work is little known, either Mulliner was genuinely ignorant of the true authorship or it was too obvious to be worth recording. The latter explanation suggests two names: Mulliner himself and John Heywood. Mulliner put his name to two works elsewhere in the manuscript but may not have signed every one, especially if some were exercises at the behest of his teacher. It is also possible that some items were copied as examples from the teacher's own works. John Heywood appears in the early pages as witness that this book belongs to Thomas Mulliner. It is a conjecture that Mulliner was Heywood's pupil. Neither is it certain that it is the same John Heywood that was a court musician and grandfather of John Donne. Nevertheless, his name best fits the description of a composer so well known to the book's owner as not to need naming. Rejoice in the Lord remains anonymous. If required to put a name to it, I would first guess Heywood, next Mulliner and third the school of John Redford.

Text

The original manuscript contained only the title, understood to be in the same hand as the notes. 'Reioyce in the Lorde allwayes'. The final 's' is already divergent from the Prayer Book versions. Expecting the whole anthem to conform strictly looks like a mistake, on no stronger grounds than that the text fits the music more neatly. It remains possible that some lines could have made it into Common Prayer but that does not require this composer to use the entire text. Most pressing is the evidence from a later hand in the manuscript.

The late eighteenth century owner of the Mulliner book was John Stafford Smith, famous now for writing the tune that became National Anthem to the United States. He wrote on many pages of the book in what feels now like vandalism but to him constituted an improvement, adding the benefit of his knowledge to the manuscript. Serving as a musician, variously singer and organist, at Westminster Abbey and St Paul's he was well placed to receive any handed down traditions. It is not, I understand, certain but the later words added to Rejoice in the Lord are in a hand very similar to Stafford Smith's. I would conjecture it was indeed he and that he was best placed to supply the words that the composer set.

The early decades of the sixteenth century saw Biblical translation into English become permissible. It was a while before any one text became dominant. It is quite plausible that only some phrases will be familiar from canonical texts. Hawkins' edition sticks to the 1549 Prayer Book, following the established practice of using an approved text. That practice was far less established in the sixteenth century. The piece may well have been composed before 1549. Many of the phrases in the hand I take to be Stafford Smith are closer to William Tyndale's translation of 1526 and some are closer to Coverdale's 1535 version. It is certainly not the

Authorized Version commissioned by King James. Crucially, none of these versions includes the 's' in 'allways', which is unequivocally present in the title. Our anonymous composer had some licence to select his own text.

There are phrases where the words in the Mulliner book fit less well than later alternatives: 'Be careful for nothing' is easier to set than 'Be not careful'. Nevertheless, these discrepancies are slight compared to the compromises due to word-setting in polyphonic music. Parts sing the same words but not to the same rhythm. The composer has to make adjustments, slurring syllables, subdividing notes, repeating words to accommodate the differences. No set translation will fit perfectly without adjustment in every part.

Editorial Principles

Note values and barring

This edition attempts to set the words as envisaged by Stafford Smith or whoever wrote them into Mulliner's book. Notes are given according to the manuscript, only halving the lengths. Performers may choose to ease the high tenor parts by transposing down to B flat or A major. Original bar lines have been retained, with dotted bars when Mulliner began a new system. The rare subdivided notes have two syllables ('say re-', 'in the') against them. Repeated words and slurs show where there are more notes than syllables. With one exception, a repeated note at the same pitch has been taken to indicate a new syllable. The bass note before 'let your softness' has been taken to be a reminder of the new key and not sung. One accidental has been discounted, being the one before the barline above 'God' in 'be knowne before God.'

Spelling and pronunciation

Occasionally, spelling has been left unmodernized. 'Thinges' looks as if it should be two syllables. 'Petitions' occasionally has an extra syllable for 'ti'. 'Supplications' likewise. Performers may work out underlay that works better for them, possibly by subdividing the notes on '-tions'.

Recurrent phrases

So far as possible, recurrent words are matched to recurrent musical ideas, such as a rising fourth on 'Rejoice' and an ascending scale on 'the peace of God'. This is hardest to achieve with 'supplications'. Performers may wish to adapt the underlay here if they find a more felicitous arrangement.

Amen

'Amen' is confined to the final two chords, allowing the chord before that to conclude the text proper. Given the existence of these chords, in a plagal cadence that is dropped from most modern transcriptions, there is no justification in making room for a florid Amen any earlier. Attempts to do that have involved compressing 'hearts and minds' into the 'peace of God' music and overwriting 'hearts and minds' with 'Amen.'

Versions

This edition is made available in four versions. A C Major print is my attempt at the closest realization of the composer's intentions. Soft copies in Capella (the software used for the transcription) and MusicXML are provided to allow for performers' modifications. A transposition down a minor third to A Major is less demanding on tenors' high register.