

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL 2026



Image credit: Maria Baranova

AF26 DIGITAL DAYBILL

El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered

Thu 12 Mar, 7:30pm
Adelaide Town Hall
Duration: 1hr 5mins, no interval

Credits

Composed by **John Adams**,
arranged by **Christian Reif**, by
arrangement with Origin Theatrical
on behalf of Boosey & Hawkes
Music Publishers Ltd.

Libretto compilation **Peter Sellars**

Musical selections **Julia Bullock**

Soprano **Julia Bullock**
Mezzo-Soprano **Margaret Plummer**
Countertenor **Austin Haynes**
Baritone **Simon Meadows**

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra
Conductor **Christian Reif**

Adelaide Chamber Singers
Artistic Director **Christie Anderson**

Soprano
Victoria Coxhill
Imogen Tonkin
Ruby Washington
Brooke Window

Alto
Riana Chakravarti
Courtney Day
Sophie Schumacher
Georgie Simmons

Tenor
Philip Houghton
Rhys Williams
Kim Worley
Graham Yuile

Bass
Andrew Bettison
Aidan Foyel
Christopher Gann
Nikolai Leske

The soaring oratorio *El Niño* by John Adams, one of the leading composers of his generation, had its Australian premiere at the 2002 Adelaide Festival in a landmark production directed by Peter Sellars.

El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered is a new chamber adaptation of this monumental work, featuring Grammy Award-winning singer Julia Bullock. Hailed as “intimate, affecting and quietly rich with activism” (*The New York Times*), this distilled rendering centres the maternal voice within what has historically been delivered as a patriarchal narrative.

Arranged by Christian Reif, with a cross-cultural libretto compiled by Peter Sellars, the voices of women and Latin American poets come to the fore, exploring the tension between new life and the reality of suffering and sacrifice.

El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered

Program Note by Julia Bullock

Traditions develop out of passionate reactions to events. The nativity story and themes that surround it have preoccupied us for centuries — there are miraculous aspects we celebrate like the unique relationship between birthing parent and child, and acts of generosity through gift giving; held alongside the challenging realities of genocide, forced displacement, and how the promise of new, or liberated, life is often accompanied by a threat and enactment of violence. That’s part of why at the end of each calendar year we seek out opportunities to consider the past cycles we find inescapable.

While the Christian doctrine is steeped in patriarchal structures and often shared through the lens of Western-European perspectives, “*El Niño*” brings the voices of women and Latin American poets to the forefront. Contrasting moments of intimate immediacy and ferocious power are what struck me when I first heard the original work by John Adams and Peter Sellars, and they’re what inspired me to find a way to share this piece with as many people and communities as possible.

It’s meaningful to present *El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered* in this distilled version — whether in the concert hall or a place of spiritual worship — because anywhere we choose to congregate can be considered sacred when we hear stories, reflect on lessons from those narratives, and witness each other in the process.

Thank you for joining us for this offering, which I hope will become a tradition.

With warmth and respect,
Julia Bullock



Image credit: Maria Baranova

The Development of *El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered*

By Julia Bullock

With any work of art that we have coined as classical, it's usually because it has lasting power. We learn from and return to it. Whether or not you have experience with the nativity story, "classical music", or even a live concert experience, the oratorio *El Niño*, helps us contemplate some of the most extraordinary moments of life in their most extreme forms. The intrinsically visceral and mystical elements in this different iteration, I hope, allow us to consider those moments in an intimate and concentrated way.

When I initially encountered *El Niño*, I had already worked with the director, Peter Sellars, but had yet to meet the composer John Adams. I was still studying at the Juilliard School, and was asked to consider performing it. I sat in a cubicle in the music library with a recording and score in hand. From the first murmurs of "maiden", I had an intuitive and instinctual response to the music and all of the lyrical material — it struck in a deep, emotional way. *El Niño* became the first piece by John Adams that I ever studied, learned, and loved. And it remains one of my favorite pieces of music, besides feeling that it's also one of the greatest collaborations between John and Peter. But with it being a mammoth work — almost two hours long, scored for full orchestra with extended instrumentation, adult and children's chorus, and six soloists (half of which are the extraordinary combination of three countertenors) — it is often not programmed, either because of the amount of fiscal resources needed to present a concert of this scale, or (maybe even more to the point) because several holiday traditions insist upon performances of G. F. Handel's *Messiah*. The "*Messiah*" is, of course, a beloved work, but it doesn't meditate on the nativity story; it rather encompasses the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

So when I had the opportunity to transform the two hour *El Niño*; it was with the intention to enable as many people to experience this piece as possible.

During my first-ever artist residency in the 2018-19 season at the Met Museum in New York City, the Met proposed that I present a program at The Cloisters during the December holidays. I wasn't exactly sure what to do, but my mind immediately began to consider *El Niño*.

The Met Cloisters was designed as a composite space, with diverse medieval architecture and art from across western Europe placed side-by-side; but I found it harmonious and integrated, an environment where I could move fluidly from gallery to garden, chapel to burial place.

To perform a musical work that celebrated Latin American poets and the voices of women in a space dedicated to western-European architecture with solely western-European religious art that was preserved by mostly western-European patriarchs was also something that felt relevant — not just to my residency, but also to the Met Museum itself. In recent years The Met incorporated curators who specialized in Latin American art into various departments, wanting to further ensure that the narratives told about The Met's art and its history are comprehensive and unabridged.

So the prospect of performing *El Niño* at The Cloisters was too good to pass up, and I wanted to see if there was a way to tell the complete nativity story using the original source material, all while being — for lack of a better word — economical.

I spent time with the score and the original recording which was released in 2001 and features two of the most inspiring and influential vocalists of the 21st century, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson and Dawn Upshaw.

It was difficult to even consider cutting the astounding choruses, or omitting the three counter-tenors, who represented the voices of both celestial and earthly messengers, but I had to keep myself on task: tell the entire story; respect that the Met could only present something that was about an hour long; honor the intimate chapel space where it would be premiered, Apse from San Martín at Fuentidueña; and consider the financial realities of a commission this large.

I wrote to John and Peter with my proposed ideas and how I intended to restructure the piece. Within two phone conversations, we had a confirmed musical selection; and it was an honor to invite Christian Reif to make the new arrangement a reality. However, I've never thought of this "arrangement" as a chamber music reduction of the original "*El Niño*", but rather a distilled rendering. It became something different, as it had to be.

This story is one for all of us. It's one we all can tell. Each soloist is given an opportunity to speak with their voice, sing with their voice, and also to sing in ensemble with each other. No one is given priority over anyone else. When remarked that this work feels communal and provides a community experience, it's because it is inherent in the structure of the piece.

The contributions of women and Latin American poets are as central to *El Niño* as the western-European interpretations from the male-centric biblical canon, with which many of us have been indoctrinated. That, I think, is what influenced the musical composition of the entire work, and certainly opens the perspective.

I initially performed *El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered* with AMOC, the American Modern Opera Company, because we have a practice of creating together. And in a piece that asks all of us to be open, intimate, and exposed — to have that actually be a reality on stage — was just extraordinary.

It is now a distinct pleasure to perform this piece every year, with different ensembles across the globe. Each time I return, I find some new point of entry to magnificence and beauty, and a deeper understanding of the messages centrally embedded within the material.

As always when sharing music, I hope that each member of the audience feels a sense of being in communion not only with all parts of themselves, but also in the presence of everyone they're around.

I've personally become more in awe of the work since giving birth. I have an even greater capacity to hold the delicate moments alongside those that are more forceful. Ultimately, *El Niño* is about a celebration of life — what the next generation (young people, our children) bring to us, what they encourage in us, what they reveal in us, and how they invite us to progress. And that is something to genuinely celebrate.



Christian Reif

Conductor

Christian Reif is Music Director Designate of Wuppertal Opera & Symphony Orchestra, where he leads his inaugural season as Music Director in 2027/28. Reif holds the title of Chief Conductor of the Gävle Symphony Orchestra in Sweden, where his term has been extended for 2 years through the 2027/28 season, and has established a reputation for his natural musicality, innovative programming and technical command.

Since 2022, Reif has served as Music Director of the Lakes Area Music Festival, a month-long summer festival in Minnesota featuring the nation's top classical performers in programming that ranges from opera and chamber music to symphonic performances along with commissioned new works. LAMF believes that high quality arts experiences should be accessible to all and operates on a name-your-price ticket model.

Highlights of Reif's 2025/26 season include debut performances with the Nashville Symphony, The Florida Orchestra, Danish Chamber Orchestra, Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, and Australian Youth Orchestra. He returns to conduct the Houston Symphony, National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, Canada, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Belgrade Philharmonic, and National Radio Orchestra of Romania.

In 2024, Reif won a GRAMMY® for the Nonesuch Records album *Walking in the Dark*, the debut solo album of classical singer Julia Bullock in which he accompanied her on piano and led London's Philharmonia Orchestra. The album was praised by Gramophone Magazine as "illuminating" and described Reif as providing "excellent support" for Bullock. In 2020 during the pandemic, Reif and Bullock recorded a series of at-home virtual "Songs of Comfort", ranging from Carole King's classic "Up on the Roof" to Schubert's Wanderers Nachtlied. NPR Music featured the duo in a "Tiny Desk Concert" for their special quarantine edition of the series, and The New York Times highlighted them on their "Best Classical Music of 2020" list.

From 2016 to 2019, Christian was Resident Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony and Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, after being the Conducting Fellow at the New World Symphony from 2014 to 2016 and at Tanglewood Music Center in 2015 and 2016.



Julia Bullock

Soprano

Grammy-winning American classical singer Julia Bullock combines versatile artistry with a probing intellect and commanding stage presence. As well as headlining productions and concerts at preeminent arts institutions around the world, she has held positions as Artist-in-Residence of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Berkeley's Cal Performances, and the San Francisco Symphony. A prominent voice of social consciousness and activism, she is "a singer of enveloping tone, startlingly mature presence and unusually sophisticated insight into culture, society and history" (*The New York Times*).

Bullock's operatic career spans repertoire from the Baroque canon to contemporary works written expressly for her voice. This season, she premieres Matthew Aucoin's *Song of the Reappeared* with the commissioning Chicago Symphony Orchestra; premieres a new Tania León commission on a U.S. solo recital tour; curates the Cincinnati Symphony's May Festival; sings *La Voix humaine* with Sweden's Gävle Symphony; joins the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin for Gershwin and Bond; and reprises two signature projects at Australia's Adelaide Festival. Recent operatic highlights include headlining John Adams's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *El Niño* at the Metropolitan Opera, and creating important new roles in Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, Michel van der Aa's *Upload*, and Adams's *Girls of the Golden West*. In concert, Bullock has performed with ensembles including the Los Angeles and New York Philharmonics; the Baltimore, Boston, London, NHK, and San Francisco Symphonies; the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin; and London's Philharmonia Orchestra and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Past solo highlights include tours with the American Modern Opera Company, of which she is a founding core member; the American, British, Belgian, and Russian premieres of *Zauberland*; and recitals at New York's Carnegie Hall, Los Angeles's Disney Hall, Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, Boston's Celebrity Series, Washington's Kennedy Center, and London's Wigmore Hall.

Bullock has developed and launched three signature projects, all flourishing nationally and beyond. Her multimedia ensemble program "History's Persistent Voice" addresses the transatlantic slave trade through songs by people enslaved in the U.S. and through visual art, poetry, and new music by B/black female composers. Devised with her husband, Christian Reif, *El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered* is a chamber orchestral arrangement of *El Niño* that amplifies the voices of women and Latin American poets. *Perle Noire: Meditations for Joséphine*, created with Tyshawn Sorey, Claudia Rankine, Michael Schumacher, and Peter Sellars, reexamines the life and legacy of Joséphine Baker. Recorded with Reif and the Philharmonia Orchestra for Nonesuch, Bullock's solo album debut, *Walking in the Dark*, won the 2024 Grammy Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal, as well as Opus Klassik and Edison Klassiek awards. Her discography also includes Grammy-nominated recordings of *Doctor Atomic* and *West Side Story*, while other honors include the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, and First Prize at the Naumburg International Vocal Competition.



Margaret Plummer

Mezzo-soprano

Principal artist at the Vienna State Opera for eight seasons, Margaret's roles for the company during this time included Hänsel (*Hänsel and Gretel*), Mercedes (*Carmen*), Waltraute (*Die Walküre*), Flosshilde (*Das Rheingold* and *Die Götterdämmerung*), Second Norn (*Die Götterdämmerung*), Blumenmädchen (*Parsifal*), Siebel (*Faust*), Varvara (*Katya Kabanova*), Tebaldo (*Don Carlos*), Page (*Salome*), Fenena (*Nabucco*), Meg Page (*Falstaff*, also for Hamburg State Opera), Tisbe (*La Cenerentola*), Hermia (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Wood Sprite (*Rusalka*) and Fjodor (*Boris Godunov*).

On her return to Opera Australia this year Margaret stars in the New Year's Eve Gala and as Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* in the Sydney Summer Season, before returning to Vienna to perform Waltraute/2nd Norn (*Die Walküre* and *Götterdämmerung*), and Clover in *Animal Farm*. Later this year she returns to the Sydney Symphony to perform the roles of 1st Norn and Flosshilde in *Götterdämmerung*, Simone Young conducting.

Margaret's most recent engagements include Prince Charming in Opera Australia's *Cinderella (Cendrillon)*, and the roles of Adelaide (*Arabella*), Martha (*Iolanta*), Second Lady (*Die Zauberflöte*), Emilia (*Otello*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Charlotte (*Werther*), Genevieve (*Pelleas et Melisande*) and Kitchen Boy (*Rusalka*) at the Vienna State Opera.

Other significant engagements for Margaret have included her debuts at La Scala Milan (*Peter Grimes*), Bayreuth Festival (*Parsifal*), Longborough Festival *Carmen* (title role), Vienna Philharmonic (Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*), Pinchgut Opera (*Castor et Pollux*, and *Iphigenie en Tauride*) and Mozart's *Requiem* with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.



Austin Haynes

Countertenor

Austin Haynes is a countertenor, poet, translator and researcher from Kā Muriwai/Arrowtown, raised between Aotearoa/New Zealand and Naarm/Melbourne, and currently based in Pōneke/Wellington. He studied a BA and Masters in Medieval and Renaissance literature at the University of Oxford, supported by the J A Scott Prize, Gibbs Prize, Michel Scholarship, and scholarships with the Oxford Bach Soloists and Choir of Queen's College Oxford.

Winner of the 2022 Herald Sun Aria and third-place finisher in the Lexus Song Quest, Austin made his professional opera debut in 2023 as Liang Shanbo in Richard Mills' *The Butterfly Lovers* with Victorian Opera and Wild Rice in Singapore. Other roles include Aeneas in Pepusch's *Death of Dido*, the Spirit in *Dido and Aeneas*, and principal soloist in *The Consort of the Moon* at Melbourne's Rising Festival. He has performed with NZ Barok, Auckland Opera Studio, and the Brandenburg Orchestra.

His solo repertoire spans Vivaldi's *Nisi Dominus*, Handel's *Messiah* and *Dixit Dominus*, Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, and Bach cantatas. Austin is a grateful recipient of the Tait White Loewenthal Memorial Scholarship and the inaugural Isla Baring Award through the Tait Memorial Trust.



Simon Meadows

Baritone

Award-winning Australian baritone Simon Meadows enjoys a busy opera and concert career throughout Europe, Asia and Australasia.

His many roles for Opera Australia have included title roles in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Gianni Schicchi*, Michele (*Il tabarro*), Telramund (*Lohengrin*), The Count (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Yamadori (*Madama Butterfly*), The Gaoler (*Tosca*) and The Lieutenant in Kate Miller-Heidke's *The Rabbits*. In 2026, he appears for the national company in *Turandot*, *The Drover's Wife* and *La bohème*.

Previously for Victorian Opera, he sang Priam in Simon Bruckard's *Cassandra*, Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol*, La Roche in *Capriccio*, Orest's Tutor in *Elektra*, First Nazarene in *Salome* and Jimmy in Stuart Greenbaum's *The Parrot Factory*.

For Melbourne Opera, Simon has performed the title roles in *Macbeth* and *The Barber of Seville*, Alberich in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried*, Faninal in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* and many others.

A celebrated concert artist, Simon has taken the bass solos in Schubert's *Mass in G* (Wexford, Ireland), Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (Romsey Abbey, UK and Melbourne Symphony), Mozart's *Requiem* (Sydney and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia), *Carmina Burana* and *A Sea Symphony* (Royal Melbourne Philharmonic) and *Judas Maccabaeus* (Heidelberg Choral Society).

Adelaide Chamber Singers

ADELAIDE CHAMBER SINGERS

Adelaide Chamber Singers (ACS) is one of Australia's leading chamber choirs, championing choral excellence for over 40 years. Founded in 1985 by Carl Crossin and now led by Artistic Director Christie Anderson, ACS unites Adelaide's finest ensemble singers.

Its repertoire spans centuries and styles, with a strong commitment to amplifying diverse voices, particularly women and Australian composers whose work reflects the nation's cultural complexities. ACS is known for artistic excellence, collaboration, and compelling storytelling.

Highlights include two award-winning premieres: *Watershed: The Death of Dr Duncan* by Joe Twist (2022) and *All Flesh is Fire* by Anne Cawrse (2024), as well as the Australian premiere of *Innocence* by Kaija Saariaho (2025). In 2025, ACS received the APRA AMCOS Art Music Award (SA Luminary Award) and will represent Australia at the World Symposium of Choral Music in Macau in 2026.

Artistic Director **Christie Anderson**

Spanish Coach: **Andrew Bettison**

Rehearsal Accompanist: **Andrew Georg**

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra



Adelaide
Symphony
Orchestra

Established in 1936, the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra is South Australia's largest performing arts organisation and a cornerstone of the state's cultural identity. For 90 years, the ASO has delivered world-class performances ranging from Wagner's Ring

Cycle to collaborations with artists like Tim Minchin and Birds of Tokyo. Under Chief Conductor Mark Wigglesworth, the orchestra presents over 100 concerts annually through diverse programming, regional tours, and community performances. Its educational programs reach 4,000 children each year, while regular ABC Classics broadcasts extend its impact beyond the concert hall. In 2026, the ASO proudly celebrates its 90th anniversary.

Violins

Kate Suthers** (Concertmaster)
Cameron Hill** (Associate
Concertmaster)
Alison Rayner* (Acting Principal
1st Violin)
Lachlan Bramble** (Acting
Principal 2nd Violin)
Julia Brittain~ (Acting Associate
Principal 2nd Violin)
Erna Berberyan
Chia-Nan Hung
Liam Osborne

Violas

Justin Julian**
Martin Alexander~ (Acting
Associate Principal)
Andrew Crothers
Linda Garrett

Cellos

Sharon Grigoryan** (Acting
Section Principal)
Gemma Phillips~ (Acting
Associate Principal)
Zoe Wallace

Double Basses

Harley Gray** (Acting Section
Principal)
Belinda Kendall-Smith~ (Acting
Associate Principal)

Flute & Piccolo

Julia Grenfell*

Oboe & Cor Anglais

Peter Duggan*

Clarinet & Bass Clarinet

Mitchell Berick*

Bassoon & Contra Bassoon

Jackie Newcomb*

Horn

Adrian Uren**

Percussion

Steven Peterka**
Sami Butler~

Keyboard

Joshua van Konkelenberg* (Guest
Principal)
Michael Ierace* (Guest Principal)

Acoustic Guitar

James Rawley* (Guest Principal)

** Denotes Section Principal

~ Denotes Associate Principal

* Denotes Principal Player



TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

El Niño: Nativity Reconsidered

Thu 12 Mar, 7:30pm

Adelaide Town Hall

Duration: 1hr 5mins, no interval

Music by **John Adams**

in a new arrangement by **Christian Reif**

Libretto compiled by **Peter Sellars**

Concept by **Julia Bullock**

Translations by **Julia Bullock** and **Myrna Diaz**

With Spanish Language Biblical text

from the Reina-Valera Bible

THE ANNUNCIATION

Rosario Castellanos (Mexico, 1925 – 1974)
from *The Sterile Virgin* (1950)

Because since the beginning you were destined to be mine.
Before the ages of wheat and of the lark
and even before the fishes.
When God had nothing more than horizons
of unlimited blue and the universe
was a will not yet pronounced.
When everything lay in the divine lap,
intermingled and confused,
you and I lay there, complete, together.

Because since the beginning you were destined to be mine.

And here, you announce yourself.
Among contradictory angels you approach,
pouring yourself like a soft music,
like a glass of aromas and balsams.

You exalt my humility,
Your gaze, benevolent,
Transforms my wounds into ardent splendors.

And now, you approach
And you find me surrounded by prayers
Like high leaping flames.

LA ANUNCIACIÓN

(extracto)

Rosario Castellanos (México, 1925 – 1974)
de *De la vigilia estéril* (1950)

Porque desde el principio me estabas destinado.
Antes de las edades del trigo y de la alondra
y aun antes de los peces.
Cuando Dios no tenía más que horizontes
de ilimitado azul y el universo
era una voluntad no pronunciada.
Cuando todo yacía en el regazo
divino, entremezclado y confundido,
yacíamos tú y yo totales, juntos.

Porque desde el principio me estabas destinado...

He aquí que te anuncias.
Entra contradictorios ángeles te aproximas,
como una suave música te viertes,
como un vaso de aromas y de bálsamos.

Por humilde me exaltas,
Tu mirada, benévola,
Transforma mis llagas en ardientes esplendores.

He aquí que te acercas
Y me encuentras rodeada de plegarias
Como de hogueras altas.

1. SE HABLA DE GABRIEL *

Rosario Castellanos (México, 1925 - 1974)

Como todos los huéspedes
mi hijo me estorba ocupando un lugar que era mi lugar
existiendo a deshonra,
haciéndome partir en dos cada bocado.

Fea, enferma, aburrida,
lo sentía crecer a mis expensas,
robarle su color a mi sangre,
añadir un peso y un volumen clandestinos
a mi modo de estar sobre la tierra.

Su cuerpo me pidió nacer, cederle el paso;
darle un sitio en el mundo,
la provisión de tiempo necesaria a su historia.
El paso, el paso.

Consentí.
Y por la herida en que partió,
por esa hemorragia de su desprendimiento
se fue también lo último que tuve de soledad,
de yo mirando trás de un vidrio.

Quede abierta, ofrecida
a las visitaciones, al viento
Quedé abierta a la presencia.

** El hijo del poeta Castellano, Gabriel, nació en 1961.*

Apocryphal Gospel of James (coda of **GABRIEL WAS SPOKEN OF**)

Now I, Joseph, was walking about
and I looked up and saw the heaven standing still,
and I observed in amazement,
and the birds of heaven at rest.
I looked down at the earth
and I saw a vessel lying there,
and workmen reclining,
and their hands were in the vessel.
Those who were chewing did not chew.
Those who were lifting did not lift up,
and those who were carrying to their mouths
did not carry, but all faces were looking upward.

I saw sheep standing still,
and the shepherd raised his hand to strike them,
but his arm remained up.

1. TALK OF GABRIEL *

Rosario Castellanos (Mexico, 1925 - 1974)

Like all my guests my son impeded me,
occupying a place that was my place,
existing at inopportune times,
making me divide each bite in two.

Ugly, sick, tedious,
I felt him grow at my expense,
steal the color from my blood,
add clandestine weight and volume
to my way of being on the earth.

His body asked to be born, to yield to his passing,
to give him his place in the world,
the provision of time necessary for his history.
The passage, the path.

I consented.
And through the wound of his departure,
through the hemorrhage of his detachment,
also went the last of my solitude,
looking alone behind a glass.

I remained open, offered
to the visitations, to the wind,
to the presence.

** Poet Castellano's son, Gabriel, was born 1961*

Evangelio apócrifo de Jacobo (coda de **SE HABLA DE GABRIEL**)

Ahora yo, José, caminaba,
y miré hacia arriba y ví detenido el Cielo,
y observé en asombro,
y las aves del Cielo en descanso.
Y miré hacia abajo a la tierra
y ví allí una vasija,
y los obreros reclinaban,
y sus manos dentro de la vasija.
Aquellos que masticaban no masticaron.
Aquellos que levantaban no levantaron,
y aquellos que no comían
no comieron, pero todos miraban hacia arriba

Ví ovejas detenidos en su lugar,
y el pastor levantaba la mano para golpearlas,
pero su brazo permaneció en alto.

I observed the streaming river,
and I saw the mouths of the kids and the water,
but they were not drinking.

The winds stopped; they made no sound:
there was no motion of tree leaves.
The streams did not flow;
there was no motion of the sea.

The maiden stood looking intently into heaven

2. MAGNIFICAT

King James Version (1604 – 1611)
Luke 1: 46-55

And Mary said,

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:
for, behold, from henceforth,
all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;
and holy is his name.
And, his mercy is on them that fear him
from generation to generation.
For he hath shown his strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
and exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath helped his servant Israel
in remembrance of his mercy;
As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham,
and to his seed forever.

3. SHAKE THE HEAVENS

King James Version (1604 – 1611)
Haggai 2: 6-7

For thus saith the Lord [...]:

Yet once, it is a little while,
and I will shake the heavens
and the earth and the sea and the dry land.
And the desires of all the nations shall come.

Y observé el río que fluye,
y ví las bocas de los corderos y el agua,
pero no bebían.

Y los vientos se detuvieron en silencio:
no había movimiento en las hojas de los árboles
Los arroyos no fluían;
no había movimiento en el mar.

La doncella se quedó mirando intensamente al Cielo.

2. MAGNIFICAT

Reina-Valera Version
San Lucas 1: 46-55

Entonces María dijo:

Engrandece mi alma al Señor;
Y mi espíritu se alegró en Dios mi Salvador.
Porque ha mirado á la bajeza de su criada;
porque he aquí, desde ahora
me dirán bienaventurada todas las generaciones.

Porque me ha hecho grandes cosas el Poderoso;
y santo es su nombre.
Y su misericordia de generación á generación
á los que le temen.
Hizo valentía con su brazo:
esparció los soberbios
Quitó los poderosos de los tronos,
y levantó á los humildes.
A los hambrientos hinchó de bienes;
y á los ricos envió vacíos.
Recibió á Israel su siervo,
acordándose de la misericordia,
Como habló á nuestros padres á Abraham
y á su simiente para siempre.

3. SACUDE LOS CIELOS

Reina-Valera Version
Haggeo 2: 6-7

Porque así dice Jehová [...]:

De aquí á poco aun haré
yo temblar los cielos
y la tierra, y la mar y la seca.
Y vendrá el Deseado de todas las gentes.

And I will fill this house with glory.
And in this place, I will give peace.

They drew near to Bethlehem.
They were three miles distant,
and Joseph turned and saw Mary weeping
and he said
"Probably that which is in her is distressing her."

Once again Joseph turned and saw her laughing,
and he said:
"Mary, how is it that I see your face at one moment laughing
and at another time weary?"

She said to Joseph,
"It is because I see two peoples with my eyes,
the one weeping and mourning,
the other rejoicing and glad."

y henchiré esta casa de gloria,
y daré paz en este lugar.

Se acercaron hacia Belén. **
Estaban a tres millas de distancia,
y volteó José y vió a María llorar
y dijo
"Probablemente lo que hay en ella la está angustiando."

Otra vez volteó José y la vió reír,
y dijo:
"María ¿cómo es que veo tu rostro unas veces
riendo y otras veces cansada?"

Le dijo a José,
"Es porque veo en mis ojos dos pueblos,
el que llora y se lamenta,
el otro regocijado y contento."

***This section is the Gospel/Protoevangelium of James (Santiago in Spanish Bible) - 17 - Apocrypha (not in King James or Reina-Valera)*

4. PUES MI DIOS NACIDO A PENAR – VILLANCICO V * (NAVIDAD, 1689, no. 287)

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (México, 1648 – 1695)

Pues mi Dios ha nacido a penar,
déjenle velar.
Pues está desvelada por mi
déjenle dormir.
Déjenle velar,
que no hay pena, en quien ama,
como no penar.
Déjenle dormir,
que quien duerme, en el sueño
se ensaya a morir.
Silencio, que duerme.
Cuidado, que vela...
Déjenle velar.
Déjenle dormir.

5. WHEN HEROD HEARD

***King James Version (1604 – 1611)* Matthew 2: 1-3, 7-8**

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea
in the days of Herod the king, behold,
there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying,

4. BECAUSE MY LORD WAS BORN TO SUFFER (CHRISTMAS, 1689, no. 287)

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Mexico, 1648 – 1695)

Since my God was born to suffer,
let him stay awake.
Since he stays awake for me,
let him sleep.
Let him stay awake,
for there is no pain,
in one who loves as if there's no suffering.
Let him sleep,
for one who sleeps,
while dreaming, rehearses death.
Silence, let him sleep.
Take care, let him stay awake...
Let him stay awake.
Let him sleep.

5. CUANDO HERODES ESCUCHÓ

***Reina-Valera Version* San Mateo 2: 1-3, 7-8 (p. 2391)**

Y como fué nacido Jesús en Bethlehem de Judea
en días del rey Herodes,
he aquí unos magos vinieron del oriente á Jerusalem,
Diciendo:

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?
for we have seen his star in the East
and have come to worship him."

Now when Herod the king had heard these things,
he was troubled [...] and he privily called his wise men,
inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,

"Go and search diligently for the young child;
and when you have found him bring me word again
that I may come and worship him also."

6. AND THE STAR WENT BEFORE THEM

King James Version (1604 – 1611)

Matthew 2: 9, 11

When they had heard the king, they departed;
and, lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them,

till it came and stood over where the young child was.
And when they were come into the house,
they saw the young child with Mary his mother,
and fell down and worshiped him:
and when they had opened their treasures,
they presented unto him gifts; gold, frankincense, myrrh.

7. THE THREE WISE KINGS

Rubén Darío (Nicaragua, 1867 – 1916)

– I am Gaspar. I have brought frankincense.
and I have come here to say: that life is good.
That God exists. I have come here to say that love is everything.
I know it is so because of the heavenly star!

– I am Melchior.
I have brought fragrant myrrh
Yes, God exists. He is the light of day.
The whitest flower is rooted in the mud.
And all delights are tinged with melancholy!

– I am Balthasar. I have brought gold. I assure you
God exists. He is great and strong.
I know it is so because of the perfect star
that shines so brightly in Death's diadem.

– Gaspar, Melchior, Balthasar, be still.
Love has triumphed and bids you to its feast.
Christ reborn turns chaos into light,
and on his brow, He wears the crown of life!

¿Dónde está el Rey de los Judíos, que ha nacido?
porque su estrella hemos visto en el oriente,
y venimos a adorarle.

Y oyendo esto el rey Herodes,
se turbó,[...] y llamando en secreto á los magos,
entendió de ellos diligentemente el tiempo del
aparecimiento de la estrella; Y enviándolos á Bethlehem,
dijo:

Andad allá, y preguntad con diligencia por el niño;
y después que le hallareis, hacédmelo saber,
para que yo también vaya y le adore.

6. Y LA ESTRELLA IBA DELANTE DE ELLOS

Reina-Valera Version

Mateo 2: 9, 11 (p. 2392)

Y ellos, habiendo oído al rey, se fueron:
y he aquí la estrella que habían visto en el oriente, iba
delante de ellos,
hasta que llegando, se puso sobre donde estaba el niño.
Y entrando en la casa,
vieron al niño con su madre María,
y postrándose, le adoraron;
y abriendo sus tesoros, le ofrecieron dones,
oro é incienso y mirra.

7. LOS TRES REYES MAGOS

Rubén Darío (Nicaragua, 1867 – 1916)

– Yo soy Gaspar. Aquí traigo el incienso.
Vengo a decir: La vida es pura y bella.
Existe Dios. El amor es inmenso.
¡Todo lo sé por la divina Estrella!

– Yo soy Melchor.
La mirra aroma todo.
Existe Dios. Él es la luz del día.
La blanca flor tiene sus pies en lodo.
¡Y en el placer hay la melancolía!

– Soy Baltasar. Traigo el oro. Aseguro
que existe Dios. Él es el grande y fuerte.
Todo lo sé por el lucero puro
que brilla en la diadema de la Muerte.

– Gaspar, Melchor y Baltasar, callaos.
Triunfa el Amor, y a su fiesta os convida.
¡Cristo resurge, hace la luz del caos
y tiene la corona de la Vida!

8. AND WHEN THEY WERE DEPARTED

King James Version (1604 – 1611)

Matthew 2: 13

And when they were departed,
behold, the angel of the Lord,
appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying,

"Arise and take the young child
and his mother and flee into Egypt,
and be thou there until I bring thee word:
for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

9. AND HE SLEW ALL THE CHILDREN

King James Version (1604 – 1611)

Matthew 2: 16

Then Herod, when he saw that he
was mocked [by] the wise men,
was exceeding wroth, and he sent forth,
and he slew all the children that were in Bethlehem.

10. MEMORIAL DE TLATELOLCO

Rosario Castellanos (México, 1925 – 1974)

La oscuridad engendra la violencia
y la violencia pide oscuridad
para cuajar el crimen.

Por eso el dos de octubre aguardó hasta la noche
para que nadie viera la mano que empuñaba
el arma, sino sólo su efecto de relámpago.

¿Y a esa luz, breve y lívida, quién? ¿Quién es el que mata?
¿Quiénes los que agonizan, los que mueren?
¿Los que huyen sin zapatos?
¿Los que van a caer al pozo de una cárcel?
¿Los que se pudren en el hospital?
¿Los que se quedan mudos, para siempre, de espanto?

¿Quién? ¿Quiénes? Nadie. Al día siguiente, nadie.
La plaza amaneció barrida; los periódicos
dieron como noticia principal
el estado del tiempo.

Y en la televisión, en el radio, en el cine
no hubo ningún cambio de programa,
ningún anuncio intercalado ni un
minuto de silencio en el banquete.
(Pues prosiguió el banquete.)

8. Y CUANDO SE FUERON

Reina-Valera Version

San Mateo 2: 13 (p. 2392)

Y partidos ellos,
he aquí el ángel del Señor
aparece en sueños á José, diciendo:

Levántate, y toma al niño
y á su madre, y huye á Egipto,
y estáte allá hasta que yo te lo diga;
porque ha de acontecer, que Herodes buscará al niño para
matarlo.

9. Y MATÓ A TODOS LOS NIÑOS

Reina-Valera Version

Mateo 2: 16 (p. 2392)

Herodes entonces, como se
vió burlado de los magos,
se enojó mucho, y envió,
y mató á todos los niños que había en Bethlehem.

10. IN MEMORY OF TLATELOLCO

Rosario Castellanos (Mexico, 1925 – 1974)

Darkness engenders violence
and violence demands darkness
to coagulate the crime.

That is why October the second waited until night
So that no one could see the hand that gripped
The weapon, but only its lightning flash effect.

And in that light, brief and pallid, who? Who is it
that kills? Who are those who agonize? those who die?
Those who flee without shoes?
Those who run to fall into the pit of a prison?
Those who rot in the hospital?
Those who remain mute, forever, with terror?

Who? Who? No one. On the following day, no one.
Dawn broke on the plaza cleanly swept **;
the newspapers reported as the main news
the state of the weather.

And on the television, on the radio, in the cinema
there was no change of program,
no interrupting news bulletin, nor even one
minute of silence at the banquet.
(Thus the banquet proceeded.)

No busques lo que no hay: huellas, cadáveres
que todo se le ha dado como ofrenda a una diosa,
a la Devoradora de Excrementos.
No hurgues en los archivos
pues nada consta en actas.

Ay, la violencia pide oscuridad
porque la oscuridad engendra sueño
y podemos dormir soñando que soñamos.

Mas he aquí que toco una llaga: es mi memoria.
Duele, luego es verdad. Sangra con sangre
y si la llamo mía traiciono a todos.
Recuerdo, recordamos.
Ésta es nuestra manera de ayudar a que amanezca
sobre tantas conciencias mancilladas,
sobre un texto iracundo sobre una reja abierta,
sobre el rostro amparado tras la máscara.
hasta que la justicia se siente entre nosotros.

11. PUES ESTÁ TIRITANDO

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (México, 1648 – 1695)

POR CELEBRAR DEL INFANTE – VILLANCICO I * (NAVIDAD, 1689, no. 283)

1—Pues está tiritando
Amor en el hielo,
y la escarcha y la nieve
me lo tienen preso,
¿quién le acude?
2—¡El Agua!
3—¡La Tierra!
4—¡El Aire!

1—¡No, sino el Fuego!
Pues el Niño fatigan
sus penas y males,
y a sus ansias no dudo
que alientos le faltan,
¿quién le acude?
2—¡El Fuego!
3—¡La Tierra!
4—¡El Agua!

Don't search for that which is not there: traces, corpses
for all has been given as offering to a goddess,
to the Devourer of Excrements. +
Do not rummage through the archives
for nothing has been recorded.

Oh, violence calls for violence
because darkness breeds sleep
and we can sleep dreaming that we sleep.

But behold, I touch a wound: it is my memory,
It hurts, therefore it is true. Bleed with blood
and if I call it mine, I betray everyone.
I remember, we remember.
It is our way of awakening
amidst so many tainted consciences,
amidst an angry text, amidst an open gate,
amidst a face concealed behind a mask.
until justice is felt by us all.

** written after the military and police massacred students and
civilians protesting the government in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas
on October 2, 1968, in the Tlatelolco section of Mexico City.
** literal translation: "the plaza day-break sweep"; "barrida" can be
translated as: to sweep clean; a political sweep; or a slaughter
+ refers to the goddess Tlazoltéotl, the Devourer of Excrement*

11. FOR HE IS SHIVERING

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Mexico, 1648 – 1695)

TO CELEBRATE THE INFANT (CHRISTMAS, 1689, no. 283)

1—Since Love is shivering
on the ice, and the frost and snow
have held him captive from me,
who attends to him?
2—The Water!
3—The Earth!
4—The Air!

1— No, but the Fire will!
Since the Child becomes exhausted
with pains and ills,
and his anxieties no doubt
leave him breathless
who attends to him?
2—The Fire!
3—The Earth!
4—The Water!

1—¡No, sino el Aire!
 Pues el Niño amoroso
 tan tierno se abrasa
 que respira en Volcanes
 diluvios de llamas,
 ¿quién le acude?
 2—¡El Aire!
 3—¡El Fuego!
 4—¡La Tierra!

1—¡No, sino el agua!
 Si por la tierra el Niño
 los Cielos hoy deja,
 y no halla en qué descansa
 su Cabeza en ella,
 ¿quién le acude?
 2—¡El Agua!
 3—¡El Fuego!
 4—¡El Aire!

1—¡No, mas la Tierra!

1—No, but the Air will!
 Since the loving, tender Child,
 burns himself
 as he breathes floods of flames
 like in Volcanoes,
 who attends to him?
 2—The Air!
 3—The Fire!
 4—The Earth!

1—No, but the Water will!
 Since the Child today
 leaves the heavens for the earth,
 and can find here
 some place to rest his head,
 who attends to him?
 2—The Water!
 3—The Fire!
 4—The Air!

1—No, but the Earth will!

** villancico was a common poetic and musical form of Latin America, popular from the late 15th to 18th centuries. With the decline in popularity of the villancicos in the 20th century, the term became reduced to mean merely Christmas carol.*

12. A PALM TREE

Two works interwoven

I. Apocrypha of the New Testament Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 20

And so it happened
 that on the third day after their departure
 Mary was fatigued by the heat of the sun in the dessert
 And seeing a palm tree said to Joseph
 "I want to rest a bit under its shadow."
 Joseph quickly led her to the palm
 and let her get down from the animal

While Mary sat,
 she looked up at the top of the palm
 and saw it full of fruit.
 She said to Joseph,
 "I wish I might have some fruit from this tree."

Joseph said to her,
 "I am astonished that you say this,
 when you see how high this palm tree is.
 You think to eat from the fruit of the palm,
 but it is not possible.
 I think more of the lack of water,
 which already fails us.
 We now have nothing by which we can refresh
 ourselves and the animal."

12. UNA PALMERA

Dos textos entrelazados

I. Apócrifa del Nuevo Testamento Evangelio del pseudo-Mateo 20

Y así sucedió
 que en el tercer día después de su partida
 María estaba cansada por el calor del sol en el desierto
 Y al ver una palmera le dijo a José
 "Quiero descansar un poco debajo de su sombra."
 Rápidamente José la llevó hacia la palmera
 y la bajó del animal

Mientras María se sentaba
 miró hacia arriba a la palmera
 y vió su fruta
 Le dijo a José,
 "Quisiera comer alguna fruta de este árbol."

José le dijo,
 "Me asombro a que me lo digas,
 cuando veas qué tan alta está la palmera.
 Piensas comer la fruta de la palmera,
 pero esto no es posible.
 Pienso más en la falta de agua,
 que aun nos falla.
 Ahora no temenos nada para refrescarnos y el animal

Then, the infant Jesus,
who was resting with smiling face
on his mother's lap,
said to the palm tree
"Bend down tree and refresh my mother with your fruit."
And at this voice
the palm bent down its head to the feet of Mary,
and they gathered its fruit,
and all were refreshed.

Then Jesus said to it,
"Rise up, palm, and be strong,
be a companion of my trees
which are in my Father's Paradise.
Open a water course beneath your roots
which is hidden in the Earth,
and from it let flow waters to satisfy us."
And the palm raised itself at once,
and fountains of water,
very clear and cold and sweet,
began to pour out through the roots.

II. Rosario Castellanos (México, 1925 – 1974)
de *El rescate del mundo* (1952)

UNA PALMERA
(*interpolada en A PALM TREE*)

Señora de los vientos,
garza de la llanura
cuando te meces canta
tu cintura.

Gesto de la oración
o preludio del vuelo,
en tu copa se vierten uno a uno
los cielos.

Desde el país oscuro de los hombres
he venido, a mirarte, de rodillas.
Alta, desnuda, única.
Poesía.

Y luego el niño Jesús,
quien descansaba con su rostro sonriente
en el regazo de su madre,
le dijo a la palmera
"Inclínate árbol y refresca a mi madre con tu fruto."
Y al escuchar su voz
la palmera se inclinó a los pies de María,
y recogieron su fruta,
y todos se refrescaron.

Luego Jesús le dijo
"Levántate, palmera, y se fuerte,
se una compañera de mis árboles
que están en el Paraíso de mi Padre.
Abre un curso de agua debajo de tus raíces
escondidas en la Tierra,
y deja que fluyan las aguas para satisfacernos."
Y la palmera se alzó en seguida,
y las fuentes de agua,
muy claras y frías y dulces,
comenzaron a brotar por todas las raíces.

Rosario Castellanos (Mexico, 1925 – 1974)
from *The rescue of the world* (1952)

A PALM

Lady of the winds,
heron of the plain
when you sway,
your waist sings.

Gesture of prayer
or prelude to the flight of wings,
into your cup are poured the heavens
one by one.

From the dark land of men
I have come, to look at you, kneeling.
Tall, naked, unique.
Poetry.