Easter comes early this year. It comes about as soon after the spring equinox as the lunar calendar (which determines the date of Easter) will permit. In cold climates this can discourage certain styles of Easter finery that people enjoy wearing on lovely, warm, sunny Easter mornings. Having to bundle up against March winds, right over Easter clothes, can be disheartening. But, of course, Easter isn’t primarily about clothes or decorations or lilies or any of the other accoutrements of the season that we enjoy seeing on a Resurrection morning. It isn’t really about music either; at least not literally.

That is not to say that our bouquets and bonnets and anthems and trumpet fanfares should be banished. The impulse to dress up ourselves, our churches and our worship for Easter is a healthy one. While it can become mere frivolity, for most people it is more than that. It is a sign of the joy and momentousness of the day. Music always plays a significant part in celebrating momentous events, ideas and occasions. You might be able to imagine Easter Sunday without pretty dresses and clean shirts—maybe even without Easter lilies. But as a Sing For Joy listener you probably can’t imagine an Easter Sunday without music; and if you can imagine it, you don’t like it. We have welcomed music into the church’s celebration of Easter and it has served us and the Easter message very well.

This past January I was with students in Greece and Turkey, studying the words and world of the Apostle Paul. Along the way we visited several Orthodox churches covered with icons on every surface except the floor, and we heard again about the iconoclasm controversy that rocked the early church for nearly a century. Is art appropriate or inappropriate? Helpful or unhelpful? Does it point to the Holy One or does it point to itself? Does it attract one to God, or distract one from God? Arguments can be and have been eloquently made on both sides of the debate. In the long run, icons were permitted to remain in the Orthodox Church of Greece, but sculpture was not. Singing—exquisitely beautiful singing—has remained, but the use of instruments has not. The same theological consternation over the role of art in the church resurfaced in the early Reformation period, and once again debates (and sometimes gangs of art vandals) raged. Because art is powerful there is always a risk that it will take our hearts and minds wherever it leads. But its power can also service its causes, including the cause of Easter.

Sing For Joy is not timid about using glorious music during the Easter season. The message deserves such music. We hope that you hear more than notes and chords and phrases; we hope you hear Easter too.

Peace be with you,
April 6, 2008

Scriptures for the Third Sunday of Easter:
(1R) Acts 2:14a, 36–41
(PS) Psalm 116:1–3, 10–17
(2R) 1 Peter 1:17–23
(G) Luke 24:13–35

“Hallelujah” from Christ on the Mount of Olives – Ludwig Van Beethoven (G)
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus: Atlanta, Ga. / Robert Shaw
(CD) Choral Masterpieces / TELARC / CD 80119
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On Emmaus Journey (HOLY MANNA) –
William Walker, arr. John Ferguson (G)
St. Olaf Cantorei / John Ferguson
(CD) Hidden in Humbleness / GIA PUBLICATIONS / CD-594
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What Shall I Render – Paul Tiefenbach (PS)
National Lutheran Choir: Minneapolis, Minn. / Larry L. Fleming
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Shout for Joy Loud and Long (PERSONENT HODIE) – Piae Cantiones, arr. Gustav Holst (1R)
Sing For Joy 50th Anniversary Massed Choir and Congregation / Anton Armstrong
(CD) Through the Church the Song Goes On / ST. OLAF RECORDS / E-2801
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Be Known to us in Breaking Bread (BELMONT) –
Gardiner’s Sacred Melodies, London (G)
Cantus Choro: Melbourne, Australia / Peter Chapman
(CD) Sing Out With Joy / MOVE / MD 3032
© 1987 10 Glen Drive, Eaglemont 3084, Victoria, Australia
www.move.com.au

Stay With Us – Egil Hovland (G)
Massed Choirs of St. Olaf College; St. Olaf Orchestra / Sigrid Johnson
(CD) Awaken Our Souls, O God of Hope! / ST. OLAF RECORDS / E-2639-60
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Abendlied, Op. 63, No. 9 – Josef Rheinberger (G)
West Coast Mennonite Chamber Choir: Vancouver, BC / Tony Funk
(CD) As Evening Shadows Fall / MCC SCS / IKR 010 CD
© 2000 MCCSCS, 103-2776 Bourquin Cres. West, Abbotsford BC, V2S 6A4, Canada
www.mccscs.com

April 13, 2008

Scriptures for the Fourth Sunday of Easter:
(1R) Acts 2:42–47
(PS) Psalm 23
(2R) 1 Peter 2:19–25
(G) John 10:1–10

Shout On – F.C. Wood, arr. Alice Parker (G)
St. Olaf Cantorei; Kevin Seal, baritone / John Ferguson
(CD) An Evening of 20th Century Church Music / WESTMARK / WCD 100105 / NOT FOR RESALE
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The Lord is My Shepherd – Thomas Matthews (PS)
Kirk Choir, Pasadena Presbyterian Church: Pasadena, Calif. / Gregory Norton
(CD) New Songs of Celebration Render / ARKAY / AR6158
© 1994 Pasadena Presbyterian Church
585 East Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena, CA 91101
www.ppc.net

Psalm 23 – Franz Schubert (PS)
Voices of Ascension: New York, N.Y. / Dennis Keene
(CD) Ave Maria / DELOS / DE 3138
© 1993 Delos International, Inc.
1645 N. Vine Street, Suite 340, Hollywood, CA 90028
www.delosmus.com

He Never Failed Me Yet – Robert Ray (G)
St. Olaf Choir; Deborah Haas, mezzo soprano / Anton Armstrong
(CD) A Choral Tapestry / ST. OLAF RECORDS / E-2047
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April 20, 2008

Scriptures for the Fifth Sunday in Easter:
(1R) Acts 7:55–60
(PS) Psalm 31:1–5, 15–16
(2R) 1 Peter 2:2–10
(G) John 14:1–14

Christ is Made the Sure Foundation (WESTMINSTER ABBEY) –
Henry Purcell, arr. Richard Marlow (2R)
Choir of Trinity College: Cambridge / Richard Marlow
(CD) Descants from Trinity / CONIFER CLASSICS / 75605 51281 2
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“The Call” from Five Mystical Songs –
Ralph Vaughan Williams (G)
Henry Herford, baritone; Philharmonia Orchestra / Hilary Davan Wetton
(CD) Vaughan Williams: Five Mystical Songs / Five Tudor Portraits / HYPERION / CDA66306
April 27, 2008

Scriptures for the Sixth Sunday of Easter:
(1R) Acts 17:22–31
(PS) Psalm 66:7–18
(2R) 1 Peter 3:13–22
(G) John 14:15–21

Praise to the Lord (LOBE DEN HERREN) – Ernewerten Gesangbuch, arr. John Ferguson (1R)
Combined Lutheran Choirs / Anton Armstrong
(CD) When In Our Music: A Hymn Festival / ALCM / CS-1
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PO Box 16575, Worcester, MA 01601
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If Ye Love Me – Thomas Tallis (G)
Theatre of Voices: Davis, Calif. / Paul Hillier
(CD) Thomas Tallis: Lamentations, Motets, String Music / HARMONIA MUNDI / HMU 907154
© 1995 Harmonia Mundi
2037 Granville Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90025
www.harmoniamundi.com

If Ye Love Me – Philip Wilby (G)
Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral Choir: Liverpool, England / Mervyn Cousins
(CD) The British Cathedral Choir Heritage / PRIORY / PRCD 5007
© 2004 Priory Records, Ltd.
3 Eden Court, Eden Way, Bed fordshire, England LU7 4FY
www.priory.org.uk

Nos vos reliquam orphanos (I Will Not Leave You Comfortless) – William Byrd (G)
Choir of All Saints’ Episcopal Church: Beverly Hills, Calif. / Thomas Foster
(CD) Silence & Music / GOTHIC / G 49064
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10 Harrison Street, Suite 311, Seattle, WA 98109
www.gothicrecords.com

When I with Pleasing Wonder Stand (creation) – William Billings (1R)
Bella Voce: Chicago, Ill. / Paul Hillier
(CD) A Land of Pure Delight / HARMONIA MUNDI / HMU 907048
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2037 Granville Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90025
www.harmoniamundi.com

Like the Murmur of the Dove’s Song (BRIDEGROOM) – Peter Cutts, arr. Douglas Starr (G)
Choir of Shadyside Presbyterian Church: Pittsburgh, Penn. / John Walker
(CD) How Can I Keep From Singing / PRO ORGANO / CD 7188
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PO Box 8338, South Bend, IN 46660-8338
www.zarex.com

Hallelujah! Sing To Jesus (HYFRYDOL) – Rowland H. Pritchard (G)
Huddersfield Choral Society / Owain Arwel Hughes
(CD) Hymns Album / EMI CLASSICS / CDP 7 46202 2
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