

## Flocks Feed By Darkness (2009)

SATB w/piano

Difficulty rating: 2+

Duration: 4'00"

Commissioned by Glass Menagerie; premiere: New York, NY, 12/05/09

The New York City chorus Glass Menagerie gave a lovely performance of my *Song of the Chester Nuns* in December, 2008. The ensemble's MD, Susan Glass (the genius of the chorus' name should be apparent!), and I had been discussing for several years the prospect of my writing a new piece for the group, and it finally came together in 2010.

Thomas Merton's "Carol" paints an evocative rustic landscape of the nativity, wherein he avoids directly naming the Babe, making Him seem all the more present. The interval of a fourth is prominent throughout, its ascending form beginning the primary melody, and its descending form functioning as a gentle "bell" motif. Gentle is the word for most of the work, dynamics only rising significantly for more than a few measures in the commanding voice of the 4<sup>th</sup> stanza. The piece, having started in F-minor, ends with a subtle glow of a jazzed-up F-major.

*"The commissioned work -- by Jonathan David -- was especially wonderful. I got so many comments from audience members about how much they loved it. Gorgeous piece, and a perfect fit for our group. Thank you Jonathan!"* --Susan Glass, Music Director, Glass Menagerie

---

### Carol (1946)

Flocks feed by darkness with a noise of whispers,  
In the dry grass of pastures,  
And lull the solemn night with their weak bells.

The little towns upon the rocky hills  
Look down as meek as children:  
Because they have seen come this holy time.

God's glory, now, is kindled gentler than low candlelight  
Under the rafters of a barn:  
Eternal Peace is sleeping in the hay,  
And Wisdom's born in secret in a straw-roofed stable.

And O! Make holy music in the stars, you happy angels.  
You shepherds, gather on the hill.  
Look up, you timid flocks, where the three kings  
Are coming through the wintry trees;

While we unnumbered children of the wicked centuries  
Come after with our penances and prayers,  
And lay them down in the sweet-smelling hay  
Beside the wise men's golden jars.

*--Thomas Merton*