

I read the note on the Boar's Head carol in the program for the 2004 alumni dinner with some interest. I'm not convinced of its accuracy; it's possible that John Hancock was involved from when he joined the faculty in 1955, but I'm sure that he didn't "research and standardize" the text, which was available in *The Oxford Book of Carols* (1928) and many other sources. Furthermore, the history breaks off in 1985, before women were added to the procession. Until then, the version sung by men only for both the student and alumni dinners was passed down from generation to generation, usually (I thought always) by ear.

A year or two after I took over, Paul Meyer gave me an "archive" he had kept; it answered some questions but raised others. After this year's procession I got curious, so I went more carefully through that file, and also checked the choral files in the Chapel annex, which go back many years.

It appears certain that the version sung by men since the 1950s has its origin in a TTBB arrangement by Robert Shaw and Alice Parker (a couple of copies were in the choral file; copyright date 1953, and it had been recorded by the Robert Shaw Chorale). The countermelody of verse 2 and details of the harmonization (the vi-iii chord progression in m. 2 of the chorus) match no other version I have seen. The Shaw/Parker version is lacking verse 3, and has a slightly different arrangement of the last two bars of the chorus on the second time through, with a couple of parts *divisi* and a higher tenor.

An earlier arrangement in the choral file, for SATB, is by E.F. Rimbault (E.C. Schirmer, copyright 1938). Handwritten notes in the two copies label the soprano part "lead," alto part "tenor," and tenor part "bar"—a rearrangement for men's voices. This arrangement ends with a cadential ornament in the tenor ("baritone") part that does not appear in the Shaw version. It has all three verses and an identical chorus each time. My guess is that this was what was used until it was replaced by the Shaw version.

The next step is, I'm certain, the version I remember from my years as a non-singing student and faculty wife. It is a handwritten version [A] of which there are a number of copies (black mimeograph? early photocopies?) in the choral file; it's identical to the Shaw arrangement in all respects except the last bar of the second chorus, which has no *divisi* and incorporates the cadential ornament of the Rimbault arrangement in the baritone part. There is no third verse on the duplicated copies, but some have it written in by hand.

When Mark Slegers was choral director at Reed in the late 1980s, he took on the annual task of organizing the carol for the alumni dinner. Paul Meyer's archive (which I disassembled except for the items that were stapled together) contained a letter from 1988 to an all-male group, a 2-page handwritten score [B], which is initialed and dated 11/19/88, I think by Mark, and several photocopies [C] of a single-page cut-and-paste job taken from that version. [B] is a straightforward copy of the earlier handwritten version [A], with performance instructions and the text of verse 3 (labeled 2 because verse 2 has no number). [C] has a number of anomalies: the first verse, numbered 1, is labeled Solo; the usual second verse appears below the chorus without its countermelody and is labeled All; and the usual third verse is underlaid with verse 1 and labeled 2. Marching instructions appear at the bottom of the page. Only the first version of the chorus appears. The copy of [C] that is still in Paul's file is dated 1988 and numbers the verse at the bottom of the page "3." (It's unclear whether or when [B] and/or [C] was used.)

The addition of women must have happened in 1989 or 1990, and for that group Mark used a straightforward harmonization [D] from the Oxford Book of Carols, which is also in the file, rather than the more elaborate male-chorus version. It's labeled "new music" in Paul's file.

When I arrived back at Reed in 1991, I found that (a) women were singing for the alumni dinner, and (b) it seemed that I was now in charge. The Oxford Book of Carols version seemed dull to me, since I still had the men's version in my ears, so I reconstructed a harmonization from memory, incorporating the verse 2 countermelody, using the traditional melody as the soprano (it was second tenor in the TTBB version), remembering the bass line that John Hancock, George Hay, and others (including some still participating) sang for all those years, and writing alto and tenor parts that fit and were fairly easy [E]. This is what we have been singing ever since, and it seems to work just fine, though it's not as flashy as the men's version [D]. (I wrote mine in D major, which was too high; we've been singing it in C major, which I now find is the key of all the earlier versions.) Maybe I'll rearrange it again one of these days to get it back to the 1960s and '70s version [A/B], but including women's voices.

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