



1. Magnificat anima mea
2. Of a Rose, a lovely Rose
3. Quia fecit mihi magna
4. Et misericordia
5. Fecit potentiam
6. Esurientes
7. Gloria Patri

John Rutter's *Magnificat* is a joyous celebration of the Virgin Mary, inspired by feast-day festivities in countries such as Spain, Mexico and Puerto Rico.

The passage from St Luke (chapter 1, verses 46-55), known as the *Magnificat*, is a poetic outpouring of praise, joy and trust in God, ascribed by Luke to the Virgin Mary on learning that she was to give birth to Christ.

It has always been one of the most familiar and well-loved of scriptural texts, not least because of its inclusion as a canticle in the Catholic office of Vespers and in Anglican Evensong. Musical settings of it abound, though surprisingly few of them, since J.S. Bach's, give the text extended treatment.

I had long wished to write an extended *Magnificat*, but was not sure how to approach it until I found my starting point in the association of the text with the Virgin Mary. In many countries such as Spain, Mexico and Puerto Rico, feast days of the Virgin are joyous opportunities for people to take to the streets and celebrate with singing, dancing and processions. These images of outdoor celebration were. I think, somewhere in my mind as I wrote, though I was not fully conscious of the fact until afterwards.

I was conscious of following Bach's example in adding to the liturgical text – with the lovely old (15th century) English poem *Of a Rose* and the prayer *Sancta Maria*, both of which strengthen the Marian connection, and with the interpolated *Sanctus* (to the Gregorian chant of the *Missa cum jublio*) in the third movement, which seems to grow out of the immediately preceding thought *et sanctum nomen eius*.

The composition of *Magnificat* occupied several hectic weeks early in 1990, and the première took place in May of that year in Carnegie Hall, New York.