I Am the Lord of the Dance

A Musical for Holy Week

Joel Raney

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Lord of the Dance

by SYDNEY CARTER

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth.
At Bethlehem I had my birth.

I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,
but they would not dance, and they would not follow me,
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John,
they came with me and the Dance went on.

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame,
the holy people said it was a shame;
they whipped and the stripped and they hung me on high;
and they left me there on a cross to die.

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;
it’s hard to dance with the devil on your back;
they buried my body and they thought I’d gone,
but I am the Dance and I still go on.

They cut me down and I leapt up high,
I am the life that’ll never, never die;
I’ll live in you if you’ll live in me;
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.

Refrain
Dance, then, wherever you may be;
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.
And I’ll lead you all, wherever you may be,
and I’ll lead you all in the Dance, said he.

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Sydney Carter’s classic hymn, *Lord of the Dance*, is a metaphor of the life of Christ. In beautiful, poetic language, Carter describes Jesus as The Piper, calling his followers to the dance of life. This work is an elaboration on that hymn, portraying each verse individually in a dramatic, colorful presentation -- all retelling the story from John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

This 30-minute work is flexible enough to be used anytime during Lent, following Sydney Carter’s hymn text, as it frames the life of Christ.

**BIRTH:** I danced in the morning when the world was begun.
**LIFE:** I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee.
**DEATH:** I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black. They cut me down and I leapt up high.

For Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, it may be concluded with the musical benediction, *My Jesus, I Love Thee*. For Palm Sunday or Easter morning there is an additional narration and underscore (*On the Third Day*) that leads into an exciting, complete setting of *Lord of the Dance*, celebrating Christ’s victorious resurrection.

Narration and scripture have been carefully chosen to complete the story, tying together the verses of *Lord of the Dance* with a variety of other timeless hymns and songs, creating a meaningful worship experience for the congregation. The piano accompaniment works extremely well by itself, while the optional instrumental parts require a minimal number of players and will enhance the overall effect.

No matter how you use *Lord of the Dance*, I hope you will enjoy sharing this musical experience with your congregation.

*Joel Raney*
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NARRATOR: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world...
...but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17) Through his Son, God’s word became flesh. “In him was life and that life was the Light of all mankind.” (John 1:4)

I Danced in the Morning
I Danced in the Morning

I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,

I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,

I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth.

At Bethlehem I
NARRATOR: And so the life of Jesus began. He grew up in a town called Nazareth. Even as a child he was filled with wisdom. He grew in stature and became strong, and the grace of God was on him. (Luke 2)

SEGUE

And I’ll lead you all in the Dance, said he.

SEGUE

I Danced in the Morning