

H O D I E

Christmas Old & New

Saturday, December 4, 2010
St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Scranton

Sunday, December 5, 2010
St. Nicholas R. C. Church, Wilkes-Barre

PROGRAM

Hodie Christus natus est.....arr. Steven Thomas (b. 1970)
Kathy Brink, Patrick Fisk, Gina Lupini,
Llewellyn Miller, handbells

Hodie Christus natus est..... Healey Willan (1880-1968)

I wonder as I wander..... arr. John Jacob Niles (1892-1980)
Lauren Cuccia, soprano

Verbum caro factum estHans Leo Hassler (1564-1612)

Jesus Christ the apple tree..... Elizabeth Poston (1905-1987)

O magnum mysterium.....Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)

A newborn child..... Robert Sund (b. 1942)

Gabriel's messageEleanor Daley (b. 1955)

Ave Maria..... Franz Biebl (1906-2001)
Larry Hickernell, tenor
Patrick Fisk, tenor

~ Intermission ~

Angel Alleluias.....Alan Bullard (b. 1947)

The angels and the shepherdsarr. Stephen Paulus (b. 1949)
Ed Wargo, flute
Kathy Brink, Patrick Fisk, Gina Lupini,
Llewellyn Miller, handbells

The shepherd's carolBob Chilcott (b. 1955)

What child is this?..... arr. Dale Warland (b. 1932)
Ed Wargo, flute

Patapan.....arr. David L. Mennicke
Ed Wargo, flute
Kathy Brink, Larry Hickernell, Gina Lupini, percussion

Round the glory manger..... arr. K. Lee Scott (b. 1950)
Kathleen C. Shucosky, soprano

Silent night arr. Edwin Fissinger (1920-1990)

Go, tell it on the mountain arr. Howard Helvey (b. 1968)
Catherine Carter, soprano

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Hodie Christus natus est:
Hodie Salvator apparuit:
Hodie in terra canunt angeli,
laetantur archangeli:
Hodie exsultant justi, dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Alleluia.

Today Christ is born.
Today the Savior has appeared.
Today on earth the angels sing,
the archangels rejoice.
Today the just rejoice, saying:
Glory to God in the highest.
Alleluia.

Today's program takes its name from the two works that begin the concert. The "Hodie Christus natus est" chant is traditionally sung at Vespers on Christmas Day. This arrangement of the chant for voices and handbells was written expressly for the Chorale's concerts this weekend. It is paired with Canadian composer Healey Willan's setting of the same text. Where the chant evokes the mystery of the season, in Willan's setting the singers rejoice with the angels.

The duality of wonder and joy continues with the next pair of pieces. The haunting and beautiful "I wonder as I wander" was inspired by a fragment of a tune that John Jacob Niles heard a young woman sing in North Carolina in 1933. Niles took the three lines she sang and developed them into a full-length song that features a soprano solo. Hans Leo Hassler was an important German composer of the late Renaissance who studied in Italy with Andrea Gabrieli. The dialogue between high and low voices in his "Verbum caro factum est" shows the strong influence of the Venetian polychoral style.

Verbum caro factum est,
et habitavit in nobis,
et vidimus gloriam ejus,
gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patre,
plenum gratiae et veritatis.

The Word was made flesh
and dwelt among us;
and we beheld his glory,
the glory as of the only-begotten by the Father,
full of grace and truth.

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Elizabeth Poston was an English composer noted for her vocal music and her work collecting and editing folksongs. The author of the "Jesus Christ the Apple Tree" text is unknown, but the poem was first published in a collection of spiritual songs in 1784.

The tree of life my soul hath seen,
Laden with fruit and always green:
The trees of nature fruitless be
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

His beauty doth all things excel:
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell,
The glory which I now can see
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

For happiness I long have sought,
And pleasure dearly I have bought:
I missed of all; but now I see
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

I'm weary with my former toil,
Here I will sit and rest a while:
Under the shadow I will be,
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,
It keeps my dying faith alive:
Which makes my soul in haste to be
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

The Chorale continues with Morten Lauridsen's modern classic "O magnum mysterium," which perfectly conveys the beauty of the scene at the manger.

O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,
jacentem in praesepe.
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera
meruerunt portare
Dominum Christum.
Alleluia!

O great mystery,
and wondrous sacrament,
that animals should see the new-born Lord,
lying in their manger!
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear
the Lord Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!

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Robert Sund is a Swedish composer and conductor, and his choir, Orphei Drängar, was named Swedish Choir of the Year in 2003. His simple, jazz-influenced setting of "A newborn child" for voices and piano is intended to invoke the innocence of the Christ child.

Canadian composer Eleanor Daley is Director of Music at Fairlawn Heights United Church in Toronto, and is a prolific composer of sacred music. The constantly shifting meters of her "Gabriel's message" give a playful take on the story of the Annunciation.

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
"All hail," said he, "thou lowly maiden Mary,
Most highly favoured lady."
Gloria!

"For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,
All generations laud and honour thee,
Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,
Most highly favoured lady."
Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head.
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said.
"My soul shall laud and magnify His holy name."
Most highly favoured lady;
Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel the Christ was born
in Bethl'em, all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
Most highly favoured lady.
Gloria!

– Rev. S. Baring-Gould (1834-1924)

The first half of the program closes with Franz Biebl's "Ave Maria." Biebl was a major figure in German choral music, and was founding director of the Department of Choral Music at the Bavarian State Radio

Broadcasting Company. His “Ave Maria” was composed in 1964, but was not well-known, even in the composer’s native country, until it was recorded by Chanticleer almost thirty years later.

Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae,
et concepit de Spiritu sancto.

The angel of the Lord appeared to Mary,
and she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum,
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you,
blessed are you among women,
and blessed be the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Maria dixit: Ecce ancilla Domini,
fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.

Mary said: Behold, I am the servant of the Lord,
let it be unto me according to your word.

Ave Maria...

Hail Mary...

Et verbum caro factum est
et habitavit in nobis.

And the word became flesh
and dwelt among us.

Ave Maria...

Hail Mary...

Sancta Maria, mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.

Holy Mary, mother of God,
pray for us sinners
now and in the hour of our death.
Amen.

The Chorale returns with Alan Bullard’s rousing setting of an anonymous 15th century text. Bullard is an English composer who was Head of Composition at the Colchester Institute in Colchester, England for many years.

Alleluia.
When Christ was born of maid Mary,
In Bethlehem that fair city,
Angels sung there with mirth and glee:
Alleluia.

Some shepherds saw those angels bright,
To them appeared with glorious light,
And said: “God’s Son is born tonight!”
Alleluia.

This King is come to save his kind,
In holy scripture as we find,
Therefore this song we have in mind:
Alleluia.

Then, dearest Lord, for thy great grace,
Grant us the bliss to see thy face,
Where we may sing with all the human race:
Alleluia.

- Anonymous, 15th century

The traditional carol “The angels and the shepherds” is originally from Bohemia and exists in both Czech (“Nesem vam noviny”) and German (“Kommet, ihr Hirten”) versions. This arrangement was composed by Stephen Paulus for the Dale Warland Singers.

Shepherds, O hark ye, glad tidings we bring,
Peace and goodwill to the world now we sing;
See in a manger Christ the Anointed,
Whom for your Savior God hath appointed.
Alleluia.

In yonder manger behold now He lies,
Whom angel voices foretold from the skies.
Seeking Thy mercy, we kneel before Thee,
Singing Thy praises, humbly adore Thee.
Alleluia.

Still through the ages the song doth resound,
Peace and goodwill on the earth shall abound;
Bear we the tidings of ev'ry nation,
Born is the Christ Child for man's salvation.
Alleluia.

“The Shepherd's Carol” was composed by Bob Chilcott for the annual service of lessons and carols at King's College, Cambridge in 2000. Chilcott was a member of the King's Singers for many years and wrote a number of their arrangements.

While Dale Warland is best known as the founder and former music director of the Dale Warland Singers, he is also an accomplished composer. His setting of “What child is this?” for piano and flute features our two guest artists today: Laura Frey and Ed Wargo. Flute is also featured, along with percussion, in the arrangement of the Burgundian carol “Patapan” by David Mennicke. Mennicke is Professor of Music and Chair of the Concordia University, St. Paul Music Department, where he has been Director of Choral Studies since 1989.

“Round the Glory Manger” is a Christmas spiritual, arranged by American composer K. Lee Scott. Scott is a prolific composer of hymns, anthems and other sacred music. “Silent Night” is one of the most beloved of all Christmas carols; this arrangement is by Edwin Fissinger, a choral conductor and composer who taught at North Dakota State University. The first two verses are in English, and the third verse uses the original German first verse:

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft, einsam wacht
nur das traute hoch heilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar
schlaf' in himmlischer Ruh!

Silent night! Holy night!
All are sleeping, alone watches
only the faithful, most holy couple.
Holy boy with curly hair,
sleep in heavenly peace!

Howard Helvey is organist and choirmaster at Calvary Episcopal Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Today's program concludes with his arrangement of the Christmas spiritual “Go, tell it on the mountain.”

– notes by Steven Thomas