

CLASSICAL CHRISTMAS



Sunday, December 17, 2017 at 3:00 p.m.

HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC CHURCH



CLASSICAL CHRISTMAS 2017

December 17, 2017

Welcome to our second performance of the 2017-18 season. This is our annual concert of Christmas Classics—unique programs of varied Christmas music drawing on masterpieces over several centuries. We present beautiful compositions that are less known, as well as seasonal favorites, and again this year, we present robust arrangements and orchestrations that will give you an unforgettable experience.

We begin our seventh Christmas concert with the joyful first movement of Vivaldi's "Gloria," and we will end it with the celebratory exuberance of the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah. Between these two commanding works we will sing a setting of "O Magnum Mysterium" by the contemporary American composer Gerald Custer; "For Unto Us a Child is Born" from Messiah; "A Spotless Rose" (fourteenth century) set by the twentieth-century British composer Herbert Howells; seven movements from Ralph Vaughan Williams's Christmas cantata *Hodie* ("This Day!"); and a suite of familiar and much loved Christmas pieces arranged by Robert Shaw and Robert Russell Bennett. There will be excitement and exuberance from the first note to the last, seasoned by moments of exquisite peace and joy. Take some time to read Millard Dunn's insightful program notes to add depth and meaning to your enjoyment as these works are performed.

I hope this concert is part of your personal Christmas tradition—if it hasn't been, I hope it will be. Enjoying this beautiful music in this beautiful space, surrounded by a community of those who also celebrate this way—what could be better!

Merry Christmas and a Joyous Holiday Season,

Mark Walker
Artistic Director

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO

(Movement 1)

A. Vivaldi

O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

Gerald Custer

FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

George Frideric Handel

A SPOTLESS ROSE

Herbert Howells

HODIE

(Movements I, V, VI, XI, XIV, XV, and XVI)

Ralph Vaughan Williams

MANY MOODS OF CHRISTMAS SUITE 4

Robert Shaw and Robert Russell Bennett

CHORUS, "HALLELUJAH," FROM MESSIAH

George Frideric Handel



The Kentucky Arts Council, the state arts agency, provides operating support to Louisville Master Chorale with state tax dollars and federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.



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PRE-CONCERT PROGRAM



Dr. John R. Hale is the Director of Liberal Studies and Adjunct Professor of Archaeology at the University of Louisville. Dr. Hale is a graduate of Yale University, with a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge, and is both a distinguished instructor and author. His many awards include the Panhellenic Teacher of the Year Award and the Delphi Center Award.

Many know Dr. Hale for his popular pre-concert programs with the Louisville Bach Society before its dissolution in 2011. The Louisville Master Chorale is extremely pleased that he has been able to take time from a very busy schedule to sing in some recent performances and that he is able to present our pre-concert program today. His engaging style and commanding knowledge are respected and appreciated by concertgoers throughout our community.

TEXTS

GLORIA IN D MAJOR, RV 589

(Movement 1)

Antonio Vivaldi

Glória in excelsis Deo

Glory to God in the Highest

O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

Gerald Custer

O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum [natum].
O Beata Virgo, cujus viscera
meruerunt portare
Dominum Iesum Christum.
Alleluia!

O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the [new-born] Lord.
O Blessed Virgin, whose womb
was worthy to carry
the Lord, Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!

“UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN” FROM MESSIAH

George Frideric Handel

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,
and the government shall be upon His shoulder;
and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God,
the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. (*Isaiah 60: 2-3*)

A SPOTLESS ROSE

Herbert Howells

A Spotless Rose is blowing,
Sprung from a tender root,
Of ancient seers' foreshowing,
Of Jesse promised fruit;
Its fairest bud unfolds to light
Amid the cold, cold winter,
And in the dark midnight.

The Rose which I am singing,
Whereof Isaiah said,
Is from its sweet root springing
In Mary, purest Maid;
For through God's great love and might
The Blessed Babe she bare us
In a cold, cold winter's night.

HODIE

(Movements I, V, VI, XI, XIV, XV, and XVI)

Ralph Vaughan Williams

I: Prologue

Nowell! Nowell! Nowell!
Hodie Christus natus est. Hodie salvator apparuit.
Hodie in terra canunt angeli, laetantur archangeli.
Hodie exultant iusti, dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Alleluia.

Nowell! Nowell! Nowell!
Today Christ is born. Today the savior has appeared.
Today on earth the angels sing, the archangels rejoice.
Today they raise their voices, saying:
Glory to God in the highest.
Alleluia.

V: Choral

The blessed son of God only
In a crib full poor did lie:
With our poor flesh and our poor blood
Was clothed that everlasting good.
Kyrie eleison.

The Lord Christ Jesu, God's son dear
Was a guest and a stranger here;
Us for to bring from misery,
That we might live eternally.
Kyrie eleison.

All this did he for us freely,
For to declare his great mercy;
All Christendom be merry therefore,
And give him thanks for evermore.
Kyrie eleison.

VI: Narration

(*Treble voices*)
And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in
the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And,
lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory
of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore
afraid. And the angel said unto them,

(*continued on next page*)

VI: Narration

(Tenor)

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

(Soprano)

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest."

(Chorus)

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory; O Lord God, heavenly king, God the Father Almighty.

(Tenors and Basses)

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

(Treble voices)

And they came with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

XI: Lullaby

(Soprano and treble voices)

"Sweet was the song the Virgin sang,
When she to Bethl'em Juda came
And was delivered of a son,
That blessed Jesus hath to name
'Lulla, lulla, lullabye,
Sweet babe,' sang she,
And rocked him sweetly on her knee.
'Sweet babe,' sang she, 'my son,
And eke a saviour born,
Who hast vouchsafed from on high
To visit us that were forlorn:
Lalula, lalula, lalula-bye,
Sweet babe,' sang she,
And rocked him sweetly on her knee.

XIV: March of the Three Kings

(Tenor)

(Tenors and Basses)

From kingdoms of wisdom secret and far
Come Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar;
They ride through time, they ride through night
Led by the star's foretelling light.

(Chorus)

Crowning the skies
The star of morning, star of dayspring calls,
Lighting the stable and the broken walls
Where the prince lies.

(Baritone with chorus)

Gold from the veins of earth he brings,
Red gold to crown the King of Kings.
Power and glory here behold
Shut in a talisman of gold.

(Tenor with chorus)

Frankincense from those dark hands
Was gathered in eastern, sunrise lands,
Incense to burn both night and day
To bear the prayers a priest will say.

(Soprano with chorus)

Myrrh is a bitter gift for the dead,
Birth but begins the path you tread;
Your way is short, your days foretold
By myrrh, and frankincense, and gold.

(Chorus)

Return to kingdoms secret and far
Casper, Melchior, Balthasar
ride through the desert, retrace the night,
leaving the stars imperial light.

(Soloists with chorus)

Crowning the skies,
the star of morning calls,
star of dayspring calls:
Clear on the hilltop its sharp radiance falls
Lighting the stable and the broken walls
Where the prince lies.

XV: Choral

No sad thought his soul afright;
Sleep it is that maketh night;
Let no murmur nor rude wind
To his slumbers prove unkind:
But a quire of angels make
His dreams of heaven, and let him wake
To as many joys as can
In this world befall a man.

Promise fills the sky with light,
Stars and angels dance in flight;
Joy of heaven shall now unbind
Chains of evil from mankind,
Love and joy their power shall break,
And for a new-born prince's sake;
Never since the world began
Such a light such dark did span.

XVI: Epilogue

(Baritone)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with
God, and the Word was God.

(Tenor)

In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

(Soprano)

And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,
full of grace and truth.

(Soloists with chorus)

Emanuel, Emanuel, God with us.

(Chorus)

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow,
And, with your nine-fold harmony,
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.
Such music (as 'tis said),
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of the morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung;
And cased the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.
Yea, truth and justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

THE MANY MOODS OF CHRISTMAS, SUITE IV

Robert Shaw and Robert Russell Bennett

Break Forth, O Beauteous, Heav'nly Light –

Break forth, O beauteous heav'nly light,
and usher in the morning;
O shepherds, shrink not with affright,
but hear the angel's warning.
This Child, now weak in infancy,
our confidence and joy shall be;
the pow'r of Satan breaking,
our peace eternal making.

The First Nowell —

The first Nowell the angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep:

Refrain

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
Born is the King of Israel.

Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord
If we in our time shall do well,
We shall be free from death and hell.

Refrain

O Little Town of Bethlehem –

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

I saw three ships come sailing in

On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning?

Our Savior Christ and His Lady,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Our Savior Christ and His Lady,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Pray, wither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Pray, wither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning?

O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the bells on earth shall ring, On Christmas Day,
on Christmas Day; And all the bells on earth shall ring, On
Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the Angels in Heaven'll sing, On Christmas Day, on
Christmas Day; And all the souls on earth shall sing, On
Christmas Day in the morning.

Then let us all rejoice amain,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Then let us all rejoice amain,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

CHORUS, "HALLELUJAH," FROM *MESSIAH* George Frideric Handel

Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

(Revelation 19: 6)

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord,
and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.

(Revelation 11: 15)

King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

(Revelation 19: 16)

Hallelujah!

Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly

Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
'Tis the season to be jolly,
Don we now our gay apparel,
Troll the ancient Christmas carol,

See the blazing yule before us,
Strike the harp and join the chorus.
Follow me in merry measure,
While I tell of Christmas treasure,

Fast away the old year passes,
Hail the new, ye lads and lasses!
Sing we joyous all together,
Headless of the wind and weather,



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ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP



MARK WALKER, Louisville Master Chorale's Conductor and Artistic Director, has extensive experience in Choral Conducting, Organ Performance, Choral Music Education, and Liturgical Church Music. He currently serves as Organist and Director of Music at Church of the Holy Spirit in Louisville. He has served parishes in Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, and North Carolina and has taught in schools in Kentucky and North Carolina. Walker previously served as Assistant Conductor for the Louisville Bach Society. Walker holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music from Western Kentucky University and a Master's Degree in Organ Performance from East Carolina University.

His conducting experience with extended choral-orchestral works includes compositions by Bach, Handel, Mozart, Vivaldi, Pergolesi and contemporary composers Rutter and Lauridsen. As an organ recitalist, Walker has performed extensively throughout the Eastern and Southern U.S. He regularly serves as conductor and organist for various Diocesan events in Louisville, and during the summer of 2011 served as both choral conductor and guest organ recitalist for the National Associations of Pastoral Musicians Conference. He also served as Dean of the Louisville Chapter of the American Guild of Organists in 2011-12.

DR. RICK MOOK, Louisville Master Chorale's Assistant Conductor, has two decades of scholarship and performance. He has engaged a wide range of musical repertoires, from renaissance motets, *fin-de-siecle* choral-orchestral works, jubilee and gospel quartet styles to Hip-hop turntablism. He holds a BA in Music and Religion from the University of Rochester, where he studied conducting, vocal performance, and bassoon at the Eastman School of Music under the guidance of Dr. David Harman, Dr. William Weinert, and Dr. Thomas Folan. He then earned a Ph.D. in Music History at the University of Pennsylvania and served on the faculty of the Herberger School of Music at Arizona State University for over 9 years.



JACK GRIFFIN is Concertmaster and Production Manager with the Louisville Master Chorale. He has held the Principal Viola position with the Louisville Orchestra since 1984, having joined the Orchestra during high school. He received his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Louisville and has also studied at The Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and Indiana University.

Griffin owns Commonwealth Musicians which provides ensembles such as string quartets, jazz ensembles and other musicians for functions such as weddings and corporate events.

LOUISVILLE MASTER CHORALE

SOPRANO

Becky Backert
Donya Clarke
Conra Cowart
Marilyn Cross
Jessica Mills
Nancy Morris
Vicky Perry
Randy Peters
Miriam Pittenger
Martha Richardson
Stephanie Smith
Anita Streefer
Diane Watkins
Maria Whitley
Laura Williams
Ruth Wright

ALTO

Nancy Appelhof
Theresa Bauer
Anne-Karrick Deetsch
Carole Dunn
Barbara Ellis
Julianna Horton
Carolyn Makk
Julie Nichelson
Nancy Nikfarjam
Linda Olsavsky
Marsha Roberts
Shiela Steinman Wallace
Elizabeth Weaver

TENOR

Alex Brackett
Rob Carlson
Bill Coleman
George DeChurch
Millard Dunn
Steve Ellis
Sean McKinley
Gregg Rochman
Jonathan Smith
Wesley Thomas
Claude Wise

BASS

Louie Bailey
Danny Blankenship
John Hale
Fred Klotter
Rob Lane
Rick Mook
Laurence Pittenger
Alex Redden
Hans Sander
Bill Schauf

SOLOISTS



JESSICA MILLS, soprano, studied voice at Indiana University Bloomington, and received a Bachelor's degree in vocal performance from Bellarmine University. In 2016, she graduated from the University of Kentucky with a Master's of music education in choral conducting. She has appeared as a soloist with many Louisville arts ensembles, including the Bellarmine Oratorio society, the Louisville Master Chorale, and the Louisville Vocal Project. She is currently the Director of Music Ministry at St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic church in Louisville, KY.



DIANE WATKINS, soprano, is a graduate of the University of Evansville, earning a Bachelor's Degree in Music Management while she was engaged in an active performance life. While there, she performed with the University Choir on tour in Russia and New York and won the Orchestra's Concerto Competition. She also sang in opera productions at Evansville and at the Operafestival di Roma in Italy. After moving back to Louisville, she has performed with the Louisville Bach Society, as well as with the Master Chorale.



MARY WILSON-REDDEN, soprano, has been a featured performer in the Louisville area for over 20 years. In addition to serving as resident soloist with the Louisville Bach Society, she has performed with groups including the Louisville Youth Choir, the Bellarmine Schola Cantorum, Kentucky Opera and the Louisville Chorus. She has toured internationally with the Stephen Foster Story and the Louisville Vocal Project. A graduate of Western Kentucky University with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance, she is a soloist with the Choir of Calvary Episcopal Church.



JULIANNA HORTON, alto, is Minister of Music at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in LaGrange, Kentucky. Ms. Horton holds music degrees from Indiana University in Bloomington and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, as well as a Diploma in Pastoral Liturgy from St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer, Indiana. An active organist, pianist, violinist, conductor, and composer, Ms. Horton sang with the Louisville Choral Arts Society for six years. Her vocal coaches have included Allison Smith, Michael Lancaster, Deborah Dierks, and Laura Lea Duckworth.



ROB CARLSON, tenor, began his musical career as a member of the Chautauqua Children's Chorale. In 2011, Rob earned his B. A. in Voice from the University of Louisville where he was a member of the University of Louisville Cardinal Singers and Collegiate Chorale. Rob currently holds the position Tenor Section Leader at St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church and has had the pleasure of performing with many local ensembles including Bourbon Baroque, the Louisville Orchestra, The Louisville Master Chorale, and various church choirs throughout Louisville.



BILL COLEMAN, tenor, has performed extensively in the Louisville area in a variety of ensembles including the Cardinal Singers, the Choral Arts Society, the Louisville Bach Society, and the Louisville Chorus. Highlights include performances as soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* and Schubert's *Mass in C* with the University of Louisville Honor Choir, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, *B-Minor Mass* and Monteverdi's *Vespers* with the Choral Arts Society of Louisville, and Boccherini's *Stabat Mater* with Louisville's period instrument ensemble Bourbon Baroque. He attended the University of Louisville.



WESLEY MARK THOMAS, tenor, has been active in many aspects of the Louisville musical community. He has been a soloist for the Louisville Chorus and has sung in the chorus for 15 Kentucky Opera Chorus productions, as well as taking roles in many musical theatre productions, including those for U of L Theatre and Centerstage. He is a prominent cantor for the Archdiocese of Louisville and a Section Leader at St Patrick Church. He obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Vocal Performance from Bellarmine University.



ALEXANDER REDDEN, bass, is a veteran soloist in and around the greater Louisville area. He has been featured as a soloist with the Louisville Bach Society, Kentucky Opera, Louisville Vocal Project, Louisville Chorus, Louisville Youth Choir, Bellarmine University, the Youth Performing Arts School Choirs, Calvary Episcopal Church and the Stephen Foster Story. He toured Italy with the Louisville Vocal Project, performing concerts in many historic venues including St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. He holds a Bachelors Degree in Music from Western Kentucky University.

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN I

Jack Griffin
Isabella Christensen
Ray Weaver
Patti Sisson

CELLO

Yoonie Choi

BASSOON

Eve Witt
Nan Tate

HARP

Louisa Ellis Woodson

DOUBLE BASS

Patti Docs

HORN

Colin Dorman
Brooke Ten-Napel

PERCUSSION/ TIMPANI

John Harris
Michael Launius

VIOLIN II

Elisa Spalding
Erica Pisaturo
Leslie Heinzen

FLUTE

Jana Flygstad
Tony Watson

TRUMPET

Stacy Simpson
Anne McNamara

PIANO/ CONTINUO

Grace Baugh-Bennett

VIOLA

Laura De St Croix
Josh Mallman

OBOE

Katherine Alberts

TROMBONE

Matt Yarborough
Mike Smith
Jesse Floyd

CLARINET

Matt Nelson
Carrie Ravenstem

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PROGRAM NOTES

In his book *Handel's Messiah: a Celebration*, Richard Luckett suggests that there is an implied narrative in Messiah. In much the same way, there is an implied narrative in our concert. We begin with the song of the angels to the shepherds and follow that with a medieval text that celebrates the mystery of Christ's incarnation. We follow this with Handel's familiar and moving setting of Isaiah's prophesy, and then a stunning setting of a 19th century translation of a 14th century German carol which celebrates the mother of Christ. Ralph Vaughan Williams recapitulates our narrative in his sixteen movement cantata (of which we will sing seven movements), Then we sing a suite of very popular Christmas carols, and conclude with Handel's glorious chorus, "Hallelujah."

In his brilliant essay "The Meaning of Meaning in Music," cultural historian and music critic Jacques Barzun writes,

[The] effort to pin down what is felt inside is of course what mankind has been doing since the invention of language. Words do pretty well when rightly used, but in the great moments we know they do not reach the heart of things, the fullness of being. We end up saying "I can't tell you how moved I was by..." This is where other means come in, including music. It is able to tell you, or rather show you, not everything but more than words can; which is why it can go with a text without duplicating it, giving us, for instance the feeling other than visual that comes with light breaking upon darkness...

Barzun refers in this last sentence to that incredible moment in Haydn's *Creation* which accompanies the words *Es wurde Licht!*

The only words I would quarrel with in Barzun's paragraph are "tell you" and "show you." He insists earlier in his essay that every piece of music has a hidden program and that, in music, every "hidden program is *visceral*" (italics mine). The meaning of music is in the music itself. It doesn't tell us or show us anything. What it does is allow us to feel, to find in ourselves, in our bodies and in our souls, what this music means to us! To each of us, individually.

Every piece we will sing this afternoon involves a text that relates to Christmas, to the birth of Christ. The music, perhaps in different ways depending on when it was written, celebrates that event, but it does much more than duplicate the text. It will offer us as we sing, and will offer you, that visceral experience which transcends the merely verbal or the second-hand visual.

ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678-1741)

Gloria, RV 589, Movement One

Antonio Vivaldi was at one time in his life perhaps the most famous musician in Europe. His cycle of four violin concerti which we know as *The Four Seasons* are still, according to Robert Greenberg, one of the two best known works of music from the Baroque era. The other is Händel's *Messiah*. Vivaldi was born in Venice, and he lived and worked there until he began to develop a career as a composer. Young Antonio trained for the priesthood and was ordained on 23 March 1703. He was soon given the nickname, "the red priest," because of the color of his hair. Within just a few years after his ordination, he abandoned saying Mass. A popular legend has it that he left the altar in the middle of a mass in order to write down a fugue. It is more likely that a lifelong health issue—perhaps asthma—relieved him of the responsibility to say Mass.

In 1703 Vivaldi was named *maestro di violino* at the Pio Ospedale della Pietà, where he was to provide musical training for the orphaned or abandoned girls who lived there. He lost this post in 1709, perhaps because the job was eliminated, but he regained it in 1711. In 1716 he was promoted to *maestro de' concerti*. He maintained some kind of connection with the Pio Ospedale della Pietà for much of the rest of his life, while he travelled widely and pursued his career as a composer.

The *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* was first a Greek hymn from perhaps as early as the 1st century. By the 6th century it had been translated into Latin, and had added text in praise of the Trinity that led to its being called The Greater Doxology. (The *Gloria patri* is called The Lesser Doxology.) Since the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* begins with the words of the angel to the shepherds in the 2nd chapter of Luke, it was probably first used in a liturgical setting as part of the services for Christmas Day. By the 16th century many composers were writing polyphonic settings for the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, perhaps the most famous of them Palestrina. By the 18th century, composers—Vivaldi among them—had taken the *Gloria* out of the Mass and set its text, with a different movement for each line of the text, as a stand-alone piece.

Vivaldi wrote three settings of the *Gloria*, one of which is lost. Most scholars believe that he wrote all three of these settings sometime around 1715, while he was at the Ospedale della Pietà. There are 12 movements in Vivaldi's setting of the *Gloria*. We have chosen to sing only the first movement, the exaltation of which sets the tone of our concert.

GERALD CUSTER

O Magnum Mysterium

Gerald Custer was born on September 18, 1953. He earned a Bachelor of Music in choral music education from Westminster Choir College, a Master of Music in orchestral conducting (while at the same time studying historical musicology) from George Washington University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts in choral conducting from Michigan State University. Wherever he has studied or worked, he has conducted choral ensembles, several of which he founded. He has won several awards for his compositions. And he has written both essays and books about choral performance. "Choral singing," he writes, "is inherently physical and innately personal, one of the most humanly intimate of all musical acts. It requires no mechanical intermediary, but clothes itself directly in our humanity" ("Provoking Meaning: Some Thoughts About Choral Hermeneutics," *Choral Journal*, v. 42 no. 4, Nov. 2001).

O Magnum Mysterium was traditionally the fourth responsory of Matins on Christmas day. The service of Matins from the time of the early church has been sung shortly after midnight. "Fourth responsory" would mean that there had already been sung, as well as the appropriate antiphons and lessons, six psalms (2, 18, 44, 47, 71, 84*) and three responsories. It is a measure of the power of this text that it would hold the attention of composers from the renaissance to the present. The three best-known renaissance settings are by Giovanni Pierluigi Palestrina (1569), Tomás Luis de Victoria (1572), and Giovanni Gabrieli (1587). The best known 20th century setting is by Morten Lauridsen (1994). With this setting Gerald Custer brings this text beautifully and meaningfully into the 21st century.

*For protestants that would be psalms 2, 19, 45, 48, 72, and 85.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

“For Unto Us a Child is Born” from *Messiah*

George Frideric Handel made himself rich and famous by writing Italian operas in England. When the English interest in Italian opera waned, Handel began setting English works to music (for example, Dryden’s *A Song for St Cecilia’s Day*). From this work with English texts Handel, always interested in drama of some kind, began to write Oratorios. Richard Lockett suggests that Handel may have had the words (selected and put together by his friend and librettist Charles Jennens) for six weeks or more before he began to write the *Messiah*. Lockett bases this suggestion on a note from Jennens to a friend, dated 10 July 1741, in which Jennens says that he has made “another Scripture Collection...The Subject is Messiah.” It is well known that Handel started work on *Messiah* on 22 August 1741 and finished it on 14 September of that same year. The work was premiered in Dublin on 13 April 1742, played in London on 23 March 1743, and had crossed the Atlantic by 1770 (when selections from the work were played in New York).

Handel may or may not have had the words for *Messiah* six weeks before he started work, but there’s no question that he had some of the music a good bit earlier than six weeks. For example, the music for the first piece from *Messiah* that we will sing, the chorus “For Unto Us a Child is Born” is music that he had written in July of 1741 for a saucy chamber duet in Italian: “*No, di voi non vo’ fidarmi, / cieco Amor, crudel Beltà. / Troppo siete menzognere, / lusinghiere Deità...*” There are several version on YouTube. Even if you can’t understand the Italian (“No, I do not want to trust you, / blind Love, cruel Beauty. / You lie too much, / like blandishing gods”) you can tell that it’s a very different piece. The text makes all the difference in how we experience the music, in what it means to us. But it’s not just the text or just the music that moves us.

HERBERT HOWELLS

A Spotless Rose

Herbert Howells was born in October of 1892. He showed early promise as a musician, was supported in his studies by a local landowner, and in 1912 he won an open scholarship to the Royal College of Music.

After he left the Royal College of Music, Howells became so ill that he was not expected to live. As he recovered, the Carnegie Trust employed him to help edit Tudor manuscripts, and from this experience he developed a strong sense of early renaissance modal counterpoint, which influenced his music for the rest of his life. His music was also colored by a deep sense of grief and loss, partly from close friends that he lost in World War I and partly from the death in 1935 of his nine-year old son.

Howells loved cathedral architecture, and much of his music was written with a specific building in mind. This led to what one critic has called, “a love of choral texture and resonant acoustics, in music of chromatic sensuousness.”

“A Spotless Rose” is a translation of a German carol, “Es ist ein Ros entsprungen,” better known to us in its more familiar English translation, “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming.” Howells chose for his text a translation by Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878), who, according to Hymnary.org, was “the most gifted translator of any foreign sacred lyrics into our tongue, after Dr. Neale and John Wesley.” The Rose, of course, is the mother of Jesus, and each verse ends with an image of the cold winter night in which Jesus was born. But the music is not cold. It is transcendent.

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Hodie (Movements I, V, VI, XI, XIV, XV, and XVI)

Ursula Vaughn Williams, the composer’s second wife, writing more than a decade after her husband’s death, tells us that after his father died when Ralph was two, his mother took her children to her parents’ house. “Besides the children,” she says, “the household consisted of grandparents and a maiden aunt, and a staff of servants, mostly local people. Judging from a photograph of a group of them, none was young, and all were slightly eccentric.” There, “all of them were expected to take their pleasures seriously.” Among the pleasures she mentions are reading aloud and music lessons. “The grown-ups devoted hours to the children’s education,” and so “from a very early age, [Vaughan Williams] was accustomed to hear the words of literature; the varied cadences of the English language were familiar; and poetry as normal an experience as prose.”

Furthermore, “In those days church-going was inescapable, and so, every Sunday, he heard and assimilated the language of Tudor England in Prayer Book and Bible.” Vaughan Williams once told his wife that “he found it difficult to read poems without wondering if they ‘would make good tunes.’” Little wonder, then, that late in his life (1953-1954; he died in 1958) when he began to compose his lengthy Christmas cantata *Hodie*, he would turn to the best words he knew to celebrate the day on which Christ was born.

Some of Vaughan Williams’s friends and critics wondered that since he declared himself an agnostic (“after he had recovered from a spell of atheism”—Ursula VW) he would turn to such religious works. Ursula Vaughn Williams suggests, “I think it goes back to his early familiarity with the Scriptures, his lifelong pleasure in Gothic architecture and his love for early English music. All these are valid articles of faith.”

Hodie doesn’t so much tell us about the day of Christ’s birth as that, within a framework of narrative settings, it allows us to experience the day through the words of others, set to compelling music that makes us active participants. Were we to sing the entire cantata we would have little time for other music, which would compromise our goals for this concert. Therefore we have chosen to sing seven of its sixteen movements.

Movement I: Prologue, medieval text, in Latin, from the Vespers for Christmas Day.

Movement V: Choral, text from a Miles Coverdale adaptation of a hymn by Martin Luther.

Movement VI: Narration, text from the 2nd chapter of Luke (KJV) and a Te Deum from the Book of Common Prayer (BCP)

Movement XI: Lullaby, text from a poem by William Ballet (c. 1594)

Movement XIV: March of the Three Kings, text by Ursula Vaughan Williams

Movement XV: Choral, text anonymous

Movement XVI: Epilogue, texts from the KJV (Baritone solo, John 1.1; Tenor solo, John 1.4; Soprano solo, John 1.14; Chorus, John Milton “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity / The Hymn,” stanzas xiii, xii, and xv (Vaughan Williams used stanzas i, iv, and v in Movement III)

Ursula Vaughan Williams tells us that

Whenever Ralph was rehearsing a choral work he would read the words to the choir, before they attempted the music, to make his singers understand the mood and the quality of the poem. Old Mr. Pottipher, from whom Ralph collected his first folk song in 1903 said, "If you can find the words, the Almighty will send you the tune."

Vaughan Williams may have had his doubts about the almighty, but he trusted words and he trusted music, and the *Hodie* makes clear he understood that by putting them together skillfully he could create an experience entirely different from anything words or music could do alone.

ROBERT SHAW AND ROBERT RUSSELL BENNETT

The Many Moods of Christmas, Suite IV

Robert Russell Bennett (1894-1981) worked as an orchestrator and arranger for many prominent musicians in Broadway theater, film, and television, among them Jerome Kern, Richard Rodgers, George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Kurt Weill, and Irving Berlin. Robert Shaw (1916-1999) trained and conducted vocal groups for several conductors, among them Fred Waring and Arturo Toscanini. In 1948 he established the Robert Shaw Chorale and began a very successful recording career with RCA Victor.

It is not surprising that by the mid-twentieth century both men were at the top of their game. In 1963 they collaborated to record eighteen Christmas carols, arranged in four suites. The recording was a hit. In 1971 they published a score for chorus and piano, and then later an orchestral score. Bennett died in 1981. Two years later Robert Shaw, by then music director and conductor of the Atlanta Symphony, re-recorded a digital version of all four suites. In 1997 SONY released a digital version of the original 1963 RCA recordings.

Both Bennett and Shaw grew up in musical families. When Bennett was ten, he picked out a ragtime tune on the piano. His mother told him immediately that such music was trash. Bennett carried this prejudice throughout his life, though he clearly had to put it aside from time to time when he worked on Broadway and in the movies. Shortly after Shaw graduated from college in the early 1940s, Fred Waring hired him to form a glee club to sing with his band. No musical prejudices were established there. *The Many Moods of Christmas* reflects the rich and varied musical experience of both of these men.

We have chosen to sing *Suite Four*, which contains the carols "Break Forth, O Beautiful Heav'nly Light," "The First Nowell," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "I Saw Three Ships," and "Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly." This selection takes us from reverence to joy and celebration, from Bethlehem on the night Christ was born to a (more or less) contemporary Christmas festival and into the new year which Christmas anticipates.

"Break Forth, O Beautiful Heav'nly Light"

The text of this carol is a free translation of the ninth stanza of Johann Rist's longer poem, "Ermuntre dich, mein schwacher Geist" (Take courage, my weak spirit), which Bach used in two cantatas, BWV 43 and BWV 248, the *Christmas Oratorio*. The tune was composed by Johann Schop for Rist's poem. Schop's tune was originally in 3/4 time, but it went through several permutations until a version in 4/4 time, which is the version that Bach used and the basis for the arrangement by Shaw and Bennett.

"The First Nowell"

Davis Gilbert published the words to this carol in *Some Ancient Christmas Carols* (1823). The tune is a genuine folk tune, taken down by William Sandys in 1827 and published by him in *Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern* (1833). The word *Nowell* is the English spelling of French *Nouel* or of *Noël*, which comes from the Latin *natalis* (related to birth). It has been used to celebrate the birth of Christ since at least the 14th century.

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

The words are by Phillips Brooks, widely known in the United States as a powerful preacher. Today we remember him for this one hymn. Brooks was in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, 1865. He left services at the Church of the Nativity at 3 a.m. on Christmas morning, and immediately began work on the hymn. He completed it in December of 1868. When Vaughan Williams published the hymn in the 1906 *English Hymnal*, he set the words to a folk tune he himself had transcribed in December of 1903, from a singer who lived in a place called Forest Green, near Ockley in Surrey. He named the tune "Forest Green."

The more familiar tune, the tune used by Shaw and Bennett, was written by Lewis H. Redner in 1868, at the request of Phillips Brooks himself. It was first published by William R. Huntingdon in 1874, in a hymnal for Episcopal Sunday Schools. Huntingdon named the tune "St. Louis."

"I Saw Three Ships"

The tune for this carol is a traditional English folk tune. It is sometimes used to set the words, "As I sat on a sunny bank, / On Christmas Day in the morning. // I spied three ships come sailing by / On Christmas Day in the morning" and is therefore often referred to as "Sunny Bank."

The words, like the music, seem to come from English folklore. Three ships? Some have suggested that this might be a reference to the camels ridden by the three wise men, but that's something of a stretch.

"Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly"

Scholars believe that the tune for "Deck the Halls" comes from a Welsh tune called "Nos Galan," and that it dates from the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Carols.org suggest that it was first published in 1881. For that reason, as well as the images in the text, for many the words have echoes of Victorian England. It is the most festive of the five carols in this suite, which is appropriate since this is the most festive season of the year.

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Chorus, "Hallelujah," from *Messiah*

What can one say about the "Hallelujah" chorus? Joseph Haydn's biographer Karl Geiringer describes the first time Haydn heard the piece: "...when all the audience, including the Royal Family, rose to their feet, [Haydn] burst into tears, exclaiming: 'He is the master of us all.'"

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