

CLASSICAL CHRISTMAS 2016



Sunday, December 18, 2016 at 3:00 p.m.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



December 18, 2016

Welcome to our second performance of the 2016-17 season. Last year we decided to create a unique program of Christmas music drawing on masterpieces over several centuries. We chose some beautiful compositions that were less known as well as seasonal favorites. Most importantly, we chose robust arrangements and orchestrations that resulted in an unforgettable experience. It was a stunning concert that concertgoers have asked us to make a family tradition.

This year we continue our 6th season with a Classical Christmas that features music from the Baroque: Bach (1685-1750) and Handel (1685-1759); to the 19th century: Anton Bruckner (1824-1896) and Joseph Rheinberger (1839-1901); to the early 20th century: Hugo Distler (1908-1942); and into our own time: Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943), Randol Alan Bass (b. 1953), and Mack Wilberg (b. 1955).

The concert will open with Handel's exuberant *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, followed by the first movement of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* (BWV 248). The concert will include three selections from the *Messiah*, Bruckner's brief but intense motet "Virga Jesse," selections from Rheinberger's *The Star of Bethlehem*, Distler's motet from 1934 "Singet Frisch und Wohlgemut" ("Sing Fresh and Cheerful"), Lauridsen's "Ave Maria," Randol Alan Bass's second Christmas carol extravaganza — *A Feast of Carols*, and Mack Wilberg's energetic arrangement of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." We are again delighted to be presenting an uplifting program of Christmas music carefully selected and prepared for your enjoyment. Works include more than 15 pieces from the liturgy, from the concert hall, and from carols and hymns. Be sure to see Millard Dunn's insightful program notes toward the back of this program.

Christmas has always been a time of wonderful connections for me — memories of my own childhood reflected in the faces of my own children, being with family and friends I've known all my life as well as those just met that evening — the myriad sounds, smells and foods of the season, as well as the many special moments and traditions and moods of the season.

That gracious plenty is reflected in the variety of music I've chosen for this holiday concert. You'll experience a still, exquisite beauty, as well as a "rock the rafters" exuberance, works written for Christmas in Leipzig as well as at the Mormon Tabernacle. Composers from many centuries and traditions have all found inspiration in the Christmas story and I hope you will find inspiration in our performance of them.

Merry Christmas,

Mark Walker
Artistic Director

A CLASSICAL CHRISTMAS

Audience Note: There will be no Intermission and the audience is asked to refrain from applause until after *A Feast of Carols* at the end. This will enable us to maintain the length of the concert at less than 80 minutes.

Selections from ROYAL FIREWORKS MUSIC (movements 1 & 2)	Georg Friedrich Händel
CHRISTMAS ORATORIO (movement 1)	Johann Sebastian Bach
VIRGA JESSE	Anton Bruckner
AND HE SHALL PURIFY (from <i>Messiah</i>) Mary Wilson Redden, soprano	Georg Friedrich Händel
THERE WERE SHEPHERDS & GLORY TO GOD (from <i>Messiah</i>) Mary Wilson Redden, soprano	Georg Friedrich Händel
SINGET FRISCH UND WOHLGEMUT	Hugo Distler
HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING	arranged: Mack Wilberg
HALLELUJAH (from <i>Messiah</i>)	George Frederick Handel
EXPECTATION (from <i>The Star of Bethlehem</i> , part 1)	Joseph Rheinberger
THE SHEPHERDS (from <i>The Star of Bethlehem</i> , part 2) Mary Wilson Redden, soprano	Joseph Rheinberger
AVE MARIA	Morten Lauridsen
A FEAST OF CAROLS	Randol Alan Bass



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PRE-CONCERT PROGRAM



Louisville-native **Daniel Gilliam** is director of radio for Louisville Public Media, and afternoon host on 90.5 WUOL Classical Louisville. Gilliam is the producer and host of the award-winning series *African American Voices*, a regular host for the Louisville Orchestra's concert talks, and a composer.

TEXTS

BACH: *Weinachts Oratorium, 1,1 Jauchzet, frohlocket!*

*Jauchzet, frohlocket! auf, preiset die Tage,
Rühmet, was heute der Höchste getan!
Lasset das Zagen, verbannet die Klage,
Stimmet voll Jauchzen und Fröhlichkeit an!
Dienet dem Höchsten mit herrlichen Chören,
Laßt uns den Namen des Herrschers verehren!*

Shout for joy, exult, rise up, glorify the day,
praise what today the highest has done!
Abandon hesitation, banish lamentation,
begin to sing with rejoicing and exaltation!
Serve the highest with glorious choirs,
let us honour the name of our ruler!

BRUCKNER: *Virga Jesse*

*Virga Jesse floruit:
Virgo Deum et hominem genuit:
pacem Deus reddidit,
in se reconcilians ima summis.*

The branch from Jesse blooms:
a Virgin brings forth God and man:
God restores peace,
in Himself reconciling the lowest with the highest.

Alleluja.

Alleluia.

HANDEL: "And He Shall Purify" (*from Messiah*)

CHORUS

And He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

(*Malachi 3: 3*)

HANDEL: “There Were Shepherds & Glory to God” (from *Messiah*)

RECITATIVE

Soprano

There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. (Luke 2: 8)

ACCOMPAGNATO

Soprano

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. (Luke 2: 9)

RECITATIVE

Soprano

And the angel said unto them: “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 Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2: 10-11)

ACCOMPAGNATO

Soprano

And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: (Luke 2: 13)

CHORUS

“Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.” (Luke 2: 14)

DISTLER: Singet Frisch Und Wohlgenut

*Singet frisch und wohlgenut!
Lobet Gott, das höchste Gut,
der so große Wunder tut
und schickt uns seinen lieben Sohn auf Erden,
dass wir durch ihn sollen selig werden. Eia!
Eine Magd gebar uns Gott,
wie es seine große Gnad gewollt hat.
Heute uns erschienen ist der Herre Christ, Immanuel,
der uns selig macht und führt aus Tod und Höll.*

*Kinder, singet alle gleich,
lobet Gott vom Himmelreich;
unser Not hat er erkannt
und seinen lieben Sohn gesandt von oben,
dass wir ihn auf Erden sollen loben. Eia!
Loben wir mit Lieb und Dank,
singen einen neuen Gesang dem Herren.
Preisen ihn von Herzensgrund
mit gleichem Mund und hoffen frei,
dass ihm unser Dienst ein Wohlgefallen sei.*

*Schaut die lieben Engel an
und tut, wie sie han getan.
Singt mit ihn'n das schöne Lied
von Gottes Gnad und neuem Fried mit Schallen
und habt dran ein herzlichs Wohlgefallen. Eia!
Wünschet Glück dem Christkindlein,
sprechet allzugleich in ein'm mit Freuden:
Ehre sei Gott in der Höh, auf Erden Fried
und große Freud widerfahre allen bis in Ewigkeit.*

Sing brightly and light-heartedly!
Praise God, the supreme good,
who works such great miracles
and sends us his beloved son to earth,
that through him we might be saved. [Eia!]
A maid has born unto us God,
as he mercifully willed it. Today the Lord
Christ has appeared to us, Emmanuel! who makes
us blessed and leads us from death and hell.

Children, sing all together,
praise God in heaven;
he has recognized our distress
and has sent his dear son from above,
that we should praise him on earth. [Eia!]
Let us sing praises with love and gratitude,
sing a new song unto the Lord
praise him whole-heartedly
with one voice and hope, openly
that our service will please him.

See the dear angels
and do as they have done.
Sing with them resoundingly the splendid song
of God's grace and new peace
and take heartfelt pleasure in it. [Eia!]
Wish the little Christ child happiness,
say all together as one with delight:
Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth,
and great joy befell all for eternity.

Translation: Erik Dorset

WILBERG: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald-angels sing
“Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled”
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim
“Christ is born in Bethlehem”
Hark! The herald-angels sing
“Glory to the new-born king”

Christ, by highest heaven adored
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel

Hark! The herald-angels sing
“Glory to the newborn King”

Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings;
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
“Glory to the new-born king”

HANDEL: Hallelujah (from *Messiah*)

CHORUS

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!

RHEINBERGER: Der Stern von Bethlehem, Part 1

ERWARTUNG

*Die Erde schweigt. Es leuchten die Sterne,
sie grüssen klar aus himmlischer Ferne.
Geheimnisvoll durch Palmen es rauschet,
in sehrender Wacht die Erde lauschet.
Über Strom und Meer, über Thal und Höhen
mit ahnendem Zug die Lüfte wehen.
Ob auch verblüht die Blümlein liegen,
es möchte ihr Duft die Starre besiegen.
Unsichtbar schwebt durch die nächtliche Stunde
nach so banger Zeit lichttröstende Kunde!
Von Oben kommt's wie thauender Regen,
thu', Erde, dich auf dem himmlischen Segen.*

EXPECTATION

The earth is still. The stars brightly gleaming,
In greeting pure, from far heaven streaming.
Mysteriously the palm trees are sighing,
In longing desire the whole earth lying.
Over stream and sea, vale and mountain straying.
Forebodingly winds are lightly swaying,
Though withered now the flow'rs are lying,
With their fragrance e'en the chill air defying.
Hov'ring unseen thro' the night's darkness gleaming,
After long, anxious fears, light, solace, is streaming!
Earth, open thee wide! From Heav'n it comes,
As soft rain caressing, to heavenly blessing.

RHEINBERGER: Der Stern von Bethlehem, Part 2

DIE HIRTEN

*O segne die Weide, Schöpfer der Welt,
Du bist es, der Hirten und Heerde erhält.*

Seid wach!

*Hoch über den Sternen dein Auge wacht,
es sieht uns am Tag, im Dunkel der Nacht.
Gepriesen, o Herr, der den Segen gibt,
mit ewiger Treue die Seinen liebt.*

Seid wach!

*Doch wehe dem Volke, das Deiner vergisst,
sich 'gen dein Gebot mit Sünde vermisst!
Einst kamen die Fluthen
vom Himmel herab,
und Hirt und Heerden versanken im Grab.*

Seid wach!

*Drum Brüder seid wach, es enteilet die Zeit:
Die Stimme des Herrn, sie fi nd' uns bereit!
O segne die Weide, Schöpfer der Welt,
Du bist es, der Hirten und Heerde erhält.*

Seid wach!

*Du lenkest die Tage, du lenkest die Nacht,
wohl dem, der zum Ende in Treuen gewacht*

THE SHEPHERDS

O bless Thou our pastures, Thou Maker of all.
Thou knowst all that shepherd and fold may befall.

[Stay awake!]

High over the starlight Thine eye of might,
Looks on us by day, Thro' darkness of night.
We praise Thee, O Lord, Thy rich blessings prove
Thou'lt faithful, eternal, Thy children love.

[Stay awake!]

But woe to the nations, that Thy way forsake,
Who 'gainst Thy command, with sinners partake!
Once opened the floods
of high heav'n at Thy breath,
And flock and shepherd were buried in death.

[Stay awake!]

Then brothers be watchful, time passeth away:
The voice of the Lord find ye ready alway!
O bless Thou our pastures, Thou Maker of all.
Thou knowst all that shepherd and fold may befall.

[Stay awake!]

Thou rulest the night and Thou rulest the day,
Thrice blest, who is watchful and faithful alway!

English: Virginia Woods Morgan

LAURIDSEN: Ave Maria

*Ave Maria, gratia plena:
Dominus tecum,
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae, Amen.*

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee,
blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

BASS: A Feast of Carols

GLOUCESTER WASSAIL CAROL

Wassail! wassail! all over the town,
Our toast it is white and our ale it is brown;
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree;
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee.
Then here's to the maid in the lily white smock
Who tripped to the door and slipped back the lock
Who tripped to the door and pulled back the pin
For to let these jolly wassailers in.

IL EST NÉ, LE DIVIN ENFANT

Il est né, le divin Enfant
Jouez, hautbois, resonancez, musettes
Il est ne, le divin Enfant
Chantons tous son avenement

Depuis plus de quatre mille ans
Nous le promettaient les Prophetes
Depuis plus de quatre mille ans
Nous attendions cet heureux temps

*[The previous verse is not sung in English.
For more than four thousand years
The prophets have promised him to us
For more than four thousand years
We have awaited this happy time.]*

Il est né, le divin Enfant etc.

Born is Jesus, the infant King;
Play merry oboes, sweet pipes resounding;
Born is Jesus, the infant King:
Come, His advent on earth to sing.

Ah, how fair is the child we sing
how delightful to behold Him.
Ah, how fair is the child we sing
He is lovely, the infant King.

VENI, VENI EMMANUEL

Veni, veni Emmanuel;
Captivum solve Israel,
Qui gemit in exilio,
Privatus Dei Filio.

Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel,
Nascetur pro te, Israel!

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel..

THE HOLLY AND THE IVY

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown.

The holly bears a blossom,
As white as the lily flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To be our sweet Saviour.

The holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas Day in the morn.

The holly bears a prickle,
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all.

The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown.

The rising of the sun
And the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.

GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN

God rest ye merry, gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember, Christ, our Savior
Was born on Christmas day
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
And it's tidings of comfort and joy

From God that is our Father
The blessed Angels came;
Unto some certain Shepherds
Brought tidings of the same:
That there was born in Bethlehem
The Son of God by Name.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
And it's tidings of comfort and joy

God bless the ruler of this house,
And send him long to reign,
And many a merry Christmas
May live to see again;
Among your friends and kindred
That live both far and near.
And God send you a happy new year,
Comfort and joy,.
May God send you a happy new year.

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy new year

Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin
Good tidings for Christmas
And a happy new year

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. He 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.



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.

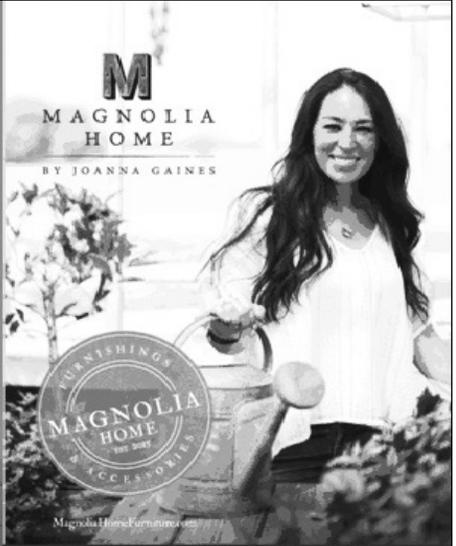
SOLOIST



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.

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Naomi Scheirich

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Rob Carlson
Bill Coleman
Millard Dunn
Stephen Ellis
Robert Powell
Alan Ramirez
Jonathan Smith
Wesley Thomas
Matthew Williams

BASS

Robert Adelberg
Louie Bailey
Daniel Blankenship
Frederick Klotter
Rob Lane
Richard Mook
Laurence Pittenger
Ben Ragsdell
Alexander Redden
Hans Sander
William Schauf
Joe Scheirich

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VIOLIN I

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Isabella Christensen
Ray Weaver
Patti Sisson
Scott Moore

CELLO

Yoonie Choi
Felix Borges

CLARINET

Matt Nelson

TROMBONE

Matt Yarborough

BASSOON

Eve Witt

PERCUSSION

John Harris
Michael Launius

HORN

Michele Chapman
Brooke Ten-Napel

PIANO/ORGAN

Grace Baugh-Bennett

VIOLIN II

Elisa Spalding
Becca Neeley
Leslie Heinzen

FLUTE

Jana Flygstad
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James Hardaway

VIOLA

Laura De St Croix
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TRUMPET

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PROGRAM NOTES

GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL: *Royal Fireworks Music*

The War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) was complicated, made up of wars, treaties, and more wars. It began with the First Silesian War (1740-1742). Before it was over, it involved almost all of the European continent. The primary antagonists were Austria and Prussia, but Great Britain had allied itself with Austria and France with Prussia. Consequently they both signed the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in October of 1748, which provided that—among other things—everyone had to give back the territories they had conquered (a formula for political disaster if there ever was one). Great Britain got a guarantee that the house of Hanover would keep its rights of succession there. To celebrate, George II scheduled a great display of fireworks. Who but Handel to write the music? He was after all the most famous composer in England, and a long-time favorite of George II.

By 1749 Handel was so famous that a crowd of over 12,000 paid to hear the rehearsal of what we know now as Handel's Royal Fireworks Music, a week before the performance, which was to be held in London's Green Garden in a specially designed structure, 410 feet long and 114 feet high, a large arch flanked by wings on each side, from which the fireworks would be launched. The performance did not go as well as the rehearsal: the London weather was bad, and the fireworks set the grand structure on fire.

The Royal Fireworks Music was the last, and the largest, instrumental suite Handel was to compose. George II had said that he wanted to hear no "fidles," and so Handel originally scored the Fireworks music for a large brass band. He later added strings to the score, and it is with a full orchestra that the piece is almost always performed today. The Overture is one of Handel's best known and most often performed purely instrumental works.

Within less than a decade after signing the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, France and Great Britain were fighting on the North American continent, and on the European continent almost all the signatory nations were stuck into the Third Silesian (or the Seven Years) War.

GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL: *The Messiah*

Handel's best known choral work is, by far, his oratorio Messiah of 1741. We will sing three choruses from this work: from Part I, "And He Shall Purify," and "Glory to God" (as well as the soprano recitatives which precede the chorus), and from the end of Part II, "Hallelujah."

Like Bach and many of his contemporaries, Handel set the words to several of his choruses to music he had already written. For example, the music for "And He Shall Purify" was originally part of a duetto da camera or chamber duet for two sopranos, "Quel Fior che all'alba Ride" (HWV 192). The first part of this duet provides the music for a later chorus in the Messiah, "His Yoke is Easy and His Burden is Light." The music for "And He Shall Purify" makes up the second and final part of the duet. Handel may have written this duet shortly before he began work on the music for Messiah.

The chorus "Hallelujah" needs no comment. It is probably Handel's best known work, the work most often performed, and most often quoted out of context. It is the chorus during which, in 1743, King George II stood up, and everyone in attendance stood as well. It established a tradition that has been honored in many parts of the English-speaking world to this day. When Franz Joseph Haydn heard the chorus for the first time, he burst into tears and said "He is the master of us all."

BACH: *Christmas Oratorio (BWV 248), Movement One*

Bach wrote only three works that he named Oratorios: The Christmas Oratorio (BWV 248) of 1734, The Easter Oratorio (BWV 249) of c.1738, and The Ascension Oratorio (BWV 11) of 1735. The Christmas Oratorio is a collection of six cantatas, each to be performed on a different day of Christmas: December 25, December 26, December 27, January 1, January 2, and January 6 (Epiphany). The Oratorio was first performed on these six days in 1734-35.

We will sing the joyful first movement of the first cantata.

The term music historians use to describe the practice of replacing the text of an existing piece of choral music with a new text is "parody." This takes some getting used to, since the word "parody" has meant (in some contexts from its first use in English) "to change the words in order to make fun of something." But Bach, Handel, and other Baroque composers used parody regularly, and with no intent of mockery. In fact, several times Bach replaced a secular text with a religious one, but he never replaced a religious text with a secular one.

The music for this first movement of the first cantata of BWV 248 comes from a secular cantata that he wrote in 1733 for the birthday on December 8 of Maria Josepha, Princess Elector of Saxony and Queen of Poland (BWV 214—Bach called it a "Drama per Musica"). The first line of the opening chorus in that cantata is "Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!" The text alone suggests the sense of joyful celebration in the music, perfect for the opening of his Christmas Oratorio: "Jauchzet, frohlocket! auf, preiset die Tage!" The entire first verse of the opening of BWV 214 (in English) is

Sound, you drums! Ring forth, trumpets!

Vibrating strings, fill the air!

Now sing songs, you exuberant poets,

Long live the Queen! shall be shouted with joy.

Long live the Queen! This is the wish of the Saxons,

May the Queen live and flourish and prosper!

Compare this to the opening of BWV 248 (see TEXTS in this program).

ANTON BRUCKNER (1824–1896): *Virga Jesse*

Anton Bruckner was born in the small farming community of Ansfelden, Austria (which has now become a suburb of Linz). Bruckner's father was a schoolmaster, which included being organist and director of music for the local church. He earned extra money playing violin for dancers in the local taverns. Early in his career it looked as if Bruckner would follow in the footsteps of his father. His first musical education was at home, and by the time he was four he was performing on a miniature violin for the parish priest. In 1835 he began to study with a cousin, Johann Baptist Weiss. But when Bruckner's father died in 1837, his mother persuaded the prior of the Augustinian monastery of St Florian to accept the boy as a choirster. He stayed at St Florian for three years and then moved to Linz to take teacher-training courses. By the autumn of 1841 he had acquired his first teaching job. But in 1845 he was able to get a position at St Florian as an assistant schoolteacher. In December of 1856, Bruckner became the organist at the cathedral in Linz, where, in addition to performing the duties required by his job, he continued to study.

While at Linz he discovered the music of Richard Wagner. In 1865 he met Wagner for the first time at the Munich premiere of *Tristan und Isolde*. For the rest of his life he was an ardent admirer of Wagner, both the man and his music.

In 1868 he accepted a job as professor of harmony and counterpoint at the Vienna Conservatory. He also held teaching positions at the University of Vienna and at St. Anna's teacher-training college for women.

Bruckner began composing symphonies in 1865, and it is for his symphonies that he is principally known today. His symphonies are often compared to those of Gustav Mahler, who one historian has called "Bruckner's faithful disciple" (Timothy L. Jackson in Grove Music Online). Attention to the symphonies has meant that Bruckner's religious compositions have not been as admired or as influential as they perhaps should be.

All his life Bruckner was deeply religious, a devout Catholic. And it is one of his religious pieces that we will sing today, his very brief but intense motet "Virga Jesse" of 1885. The text was often used as a gradual in the mass. Bruckner's setting reflects in its harmony the surprising mystery of the Incarnation. Among other things, he repeats the first line at the beginning of the piece, thus the word "floruit" appears twice and both times Bruckner sets the word to the Dresden Amen, which opens itself musically like the blossoming of a flower.

HUGO DISTLER (1908-1942):

"Singet Frisch und Wohlgemut"

Adolf Hitler fancied himself a painter and a musician. He knew what he liked, or—more to the point—he knew what he didn't like. From the time the National Socialist party came to power, art museums came under attack. Many artists fled the country. The Nazi reaction to modern art, to abstract painting, to any artist whose work belonged to the school of Cubism, Expressionism, or Surrealism, was sometimes vicious. On July 19, 1937, the Nazis put together an art exhibit to show the Germans just how degenerate modern art had become. The exhibit was entitled *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art). The Germans loved it. According to the catalog of an exhibit put together by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1991, an exhibit entitled *Degenerate Art: the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, more than two million viewers passed through the exhibit in Munich. And then for the next three years it travelled to many cities in Germany and Austria.

Music came under the same scrutiny that modern art did, and in May of 1938 a festival called the Reichsmusiktag opened in Dusseldorf, dedicated to celebrate pure German music. The festival included an exhibit entitled *Entartete Musik*. After the festival had ended, the exhibit travelled around the Reich with the *Entartete Kunst* exhibit.

In addition to jazz and the distortions of such modern composers as Hindemith, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Webern and Weill, the Nazis opposed church music of any kind. However the Nazis also made clear when they came to power that musicians who were members of the Nazi party would be first in line for jobs. Hugo Distler would have been in his mid-twenties when the Nazis came to power, and he joined the NSDAP partly in hopes of employment and partly because he believed (erroneously) that Protestant church music in Germany would be allowed to flourish under the Nazis.

In October of 1933 Distler became head of the chamber music department of the Lubeck Conservatory, and he began teaching at the Church Music School in Spandau, Berlin. During this period of his life he wrote the nine motets that make up his *Geistliche Chormusik* (Opus 12), from which we will sing the fourth motet, "Singet frisch und wohlgemut" (1934).

Robi Polgar, writing for the Austin Chronicle, says of Distler's Opus 12 that it is, "some of the most spiritually uplifting, and terrifying, music—music that offended the Nazis' cultural sensibilities and nearly was proclaimed 'Degenerate Art,' yet that hearkened back to medieval forms and carried a liturgical beauty and social resonance that transcended its time." Brad Pierson in his doctoral

dissertation provides a list of compositional techniques he will study in Distler's music (which, by the way, we might listen for). It's a long list but among them are "Recurring rhythmic motives, Added chord tones in cadential material, Regularly changing meter, Counterpoint and imitation, Use of chorale melodies, Melodic material in extended cadences, and Frequent use of parallel fourths and fifths." In "Singet Frisch und Wohlgemut" the word "Eia" appears prominently in several places. There is no exact English translation for this word, but it appears frequently in German lullabies. Whenever we sing the word, Distler clearly intends to suggest a lullaby, appropriate to Christmas and a gentle balance to the joyful celebration of the rest of the piece.

From the time of this work Distler had to live with the threat of his work being condemned by the Nazis. And once the war broke out, he was terrified of being called up for military duty. Furthermore, the effects of the allied bombing on the German cities he loved added to his anxiety and despair. Then, in the autumn of 1942 he received a summons to join a Panzer division. On the 1st of November, 1942, he moved his bed into the kitchen, turned on the gas, lay down, and died. He was 34 years old.

MACK WILBERG (B. 1955)

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Mack Wilberg has been music director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir since March of 2008. He has a bachelor's degree in music from Brigham Young University and a master's degree and PhD from the University of Southern California. Before becoming music director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir he was a professor of music at his alma mater, Brigham Young University. His arrangements and compositions have been widely performed and recorded.

The words to "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" were written by Charles Wesley and first published in Wesley's *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London, 1739). The first two lines of Wesley's original poem were "Hark, how all the welkin rings / Glory to the King of kings . . ." The 1909 edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* opined that "If the grand old Saxon word for the vault of heaven can be revived, it will be good." Changing these lines was only the first of many changes made over the years and in many hymnals. The most recent change is the 1982 Episcopal Hymnal. Wesley's original verse read:

Mild He lays His glory by,
Born—that man no more may die,
Born—to raise the sons of earth,
Born—to give them second birth.

For the 1982 Hymnal these lines were changed to

Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise us from the earth,
Born to give us second birth.

Wilberg's arrangement does not adopt this change in the words.

Wesley's poem was set to several tunes, including that of the Easter hymn "Jesus Christ is risen today," before someone set it to the tune of the "Number 2, 'Lied'" from Mendelssohn's *Festgesang* of 1840. Of the music to that song Mendelssohn said, "I think there ought to be other words to no. 2, the 'Lied.' If the right ones are hit at, I am sure that piece will be liked very much by the singers

and the hearers, but it will *never* do to sacred words” (emphasis Mendelssohn’s).

Wilberg’s uplifting arrangement begins with a fanfare which becomes, with one exception, a vehicle for modulating to another key. When the voices enter for the first time it is in the key of E-flat. Another fanfare takes us to the second verse, sung by the sopranos and altos still in the key of E-flat. The next fanfare modulates to the key of C major, which takes us to the end of the work. The piece ends with a recapitulation of the first line of the lyrics, but in the last eight measures, on the word “King,” Wilburn introduces a dissonance that suggests perhaps another modulation—where is he going here?—before ending with a glorious C major chord.

JOSEPH RHEINBERGER (1839-1901): *Der Stern von Bethlehem (The Star of Bethlehem)*

According to Grove Music Online, “Rheinberger’s lasting fame resulted primarily from his teaching.” They follow this with a list of his students, the best known of whom are probably Humperdinck and Furtwängler. *The Oxford Companion to Music* says that he “is remembered almost exclusively for his 20 organ Sonatas.” His biography reads almost like a charmed life: first lessons on the organ when he was five years old, church organist at seven, frequent public appearances playing the piano before he was ten, moved to Munich for further study, married a “socially influential and widely cultured woman who was also a gifted poet,” Hofkapellmeister before he was forty, an honorary doctorate from the University of Munich in 1899, and more. And yet he is described as having a “retiring, somewhat melancholy nature” (Grove Music Online).

Musically, he would have to be called a conservative, influenced more by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and other early romantic composers. He refused to be influenced by Wagner, Liszt, and the New German School.

In 1867 Rheinberger married Franziska von Hoffnaaß (1831-1892, nickname: Fanny). Rheinberger set many of his wife’s poems to music, but the most important work to make use of her poetry is his *Der Stern von Bethlehem (The Star of Bethlehem)*, Opus 164, (1891). Rheinberger’s wife died before he had finished the work. But he considered this work his masterpiece, even though he himself may not have lived to hear it played.

The Star of Bethlehem tells the story of the birth of Jesus in nine parts:

1. Erwartung (Expectation) Chorus
2. Die Hirten (The Shepherds) Soprano solo and chorus
3. Erscheinung des Engels (The Appearance of the Angel) Soprano solo and chorus
4. Bethlehem Bass solo
5. Die Hirten an der Krippe (The Shepherds at the Manger) Chorus
6. Der Stern (The Star) Chorus
7. Anbetung der Weisen (Adoration of the Wise Men) Soli, or small chorus
8. Maria Soprano solo
9. Erfüllung (Fulfillment) Chorus

We will sing the first two parts. You will hear in Rheinberger’s music the work of a man who thoroughly understands the classical tradition and the transformations wrought upon it by the early romantic composers. He did not like the music of Wagner and Liszt, but he never tried to impose his musical tastes on his students. According to Oxford Music Online, “The strength of his works...lies in the indisputable mastery and the planned coherence of his compositional style,

which is imbued with the spirit of polyphonic thinking rather than compelling inventiveness or vivid conception.” This may seem like faint praise, but what you will hear in these first two movements is the work of a master: soaring, lyrical, and beautiful.

MORTEN LAURIDSEN (B. 1943): “Ave Maria”

In 2006 the National Endowment for the Arts named Morten Lauridsen an American Choral Master. A year later he was given the highest award an artist can receive in the United States, the National Medal of Arts. The president’s comments at the award ceremony described Lauridsen’s music as “radiant choral works combining musical beauty, power, and spiritual depth.” Along with many other works, the prolific Lauridsen has set to music the poetry of Robert Graves, Howard Moss, Rilke, Neruda, James Agee, Lorca, Dana Gioia, and Sam Witt. He has also set several religious texts, including “O Magnum Mysterium”, “Lux Aeterna”, “Ubi Caritas et Amor”, “O Nata Lux”, and “Ave Maria”. Musicologist and conductor Nick Strimple has called Lauridsen “the only American composer in history who can be called a mystic.”

Lauridsen’s “Ave Maria” may not be the best known setting of this text, but it is certainly one of the richest in vocal texture, one of the most worshipful, and one of the most beautiful. Listen for yourself.

RANDOL ALAN BASS (B. 1953): *A Feast of Carols*

In 1985 Randol Alan Bass was commissioned by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra to write several Christmas carol medleys for chorus and orchestra. *A Feast of Carols* was the first. He went on to write three more Christmas medleys for Dallas: *Christmas Flourish* in 1992, *Symphony of Carols* (which we sang on our Christmas concert last year) in 1997, and *Seasonal Sounds* for the Dallas Symphony Christmas Pops concerts in 1999. He has also written Christmas medleys for the Grand Rapids Symphony and Chorus (1988), The Boston Pops (1999), The Highland Park Presbyterian Church of Dallas (1999), the Houston Symphony Holiday Pops concerts (2003, with narration), And the Chicago Symphony and Chorus (2005).

I suspect that the other medleys exhibit the same variety, the same rich use of modulation, the same ability to surprise and delight that *A Feast of Carols* does. The carols you will hear, in order are

- “Gloucester Wassail,”
- “Il est née, le divin enfant” (in French and English),
- “O Come, O Come Emanuel” (in Latin and English),
- “The Holly and the Ivy,”
- “God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen,”
- “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.”

Bass’s orchestration is full of surprises, from the opening measures in the full orchestra that preview the carols we will hear, to a delicate almost Irish jig played by the violins (twelve measures near the end of the piece as he modulates from f minor to B major). The “Gloucester Wassail” begins in G major. “We Wish You a Merry Christmas” ends in C major. Between the beginning and the end there are more than a dozen modulations, sometimes into very unexpected keys. He modulates between carols, and he modulates within carols. The effect is to command our attention, to draw us into the music. It offers us an exhilarating celebration of the season.

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