

FIVE MYSTICAL SONGS

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

TRUMPET CONCERTO *in Eb Major*

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

TRUMPET: Stacy Simpson

Tribute To Mike Tunnell

HYMN OF PRAISE

FELIX MENDELSSOHN



Sunday, March 22, 2015
Church of the Holy Spirit



March 22, 2015

Dear Friends,

This afternoon we are pleased to present an extraordinary program. The chorus and orchestra will perform the remarkable *Five Mystical Songs* by Ralph Vaughan Williams and the uplifting *Hymn of Praise (Lobgesang)* by Felix Mendelssohn. We will also present a special tribute to the life of Mike Tunnell who shared his enormous talents and friendship with us until his death in December, 2014. The very gifted soloist Stacy Simpson, who was once his student, will play Haydn's wonderfully orchestrated *Trumpet Concerto in E flat Major*.

We are also pleased to be performing at the Church of the Holy Spirit. We appreciate the warm hospitality and are delighted to be in such a splendid facility.

This has been a very rewarding season for the Louisville Master Chorale. In addition to our three major concerts we were also able to present a youth program at the Parkland Boys and Girls Club and an extremely well-received program at Belmont Village for an audience that included many who are unable to attend traditional concerts.

Thank you for being here today to enjoy this magnificent repertoire. We appreciate your support as we continue to celebrate outstanding choral works – and we hope to see you again next season. Please see the inside back cover of this program for a preview.

Warmest regards,

Matt Lindblom
President

Mark Walker
Artistic Director

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Five Mystical Songs*

Zachary James Cavan, *baritone*

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN: *Trumpet Concerto in Eb Major*

Tribute to Mike Tunnell

Stacy Simpson, *trumpet*

Interval (10 minutes)

FELIX MENDELSSOHN: *Hymn of Praise*

Jasmine Davis, *soprano*

Mary Wilson-Redden, *soprano*

William Coleman, *tenor*

Sunday, March 22, 2015

Church of the Holy Spirit

3345 LEXINGTON ROAD, LOUISVILLE, KY

Mark Walker, CONDUCTOR & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Philip Brisson, ASSOCIATE & ACCOMPANIST

Jack Griffin, CONCERTMASTER & PRODUCTION MANAGER



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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 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 preconcert 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.

LIBRETTI

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Five Mystical Songs* *Poems by George Herbert, from *The Temple* (1633)*

1. Easter

Rise, heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With him may'st rise;
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold and, much more, just.

Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art.
The cross taught all wood to resound his name,
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
Is best to celebrate this most high day.

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song
Pleasant and long;
Or since all music is but three parts vied
And multiplied.
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
And make up our defects with his sweet art.

2. I Got Me Flowers

I got me flowers to strew thy way;
I got me boughs off many a tree:
But thou wast up by break of day,
And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

The Sun arising in the East.
Though he give light, and the East perfume;
If they should offer to contest
With thy arising, they presume.

Can there be any day but this,
Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?
We count three hundred, but we miss:
There is but one, and that one ever.

3. Love Bade Me Welcome

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back.
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

4. The Call

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
Such a Life, as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
Such a Light, as shows a feast:
Such a Feast, as mends in length:
Such a Strength, as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
Such a Joy, as none can move:
Such a Love, as none can part:
Such a Heart, as joys in love.

5. Antiphon

Let all the world in every corner sing:
My God and King.

The heavens are not too high,
His praise may thither fly;
The earth is not too low,
His praises there may grow.

Let all the world in every corner sing:
My God and King.

The Church with psalms must shout,
No door can keep them out;
But above all, the heart
Must bear the longest part.

Let all the world in every corner sing:
My God and King.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN: Hymn of Praise (Lobgesang, Cantata), Op.52 English Translation by J. Alfred Novello

1. Alles was Odem hat lobe den Herrn

(Chorus)

All men, all things, all that has life and breath.
All that has life, sing to the Lord, Hallelujah.
Praise the Lord with lute and harp,
In joyful song extol Him,
And let all flesh magnify His might and His glory
And worship the Lord.

(Soprano Solo & Women's Chorus)

Praise thou the Lord, O my spirit,
And my inmost soul praise His great loving kindness
And forget thou not all His benefits.

2. Saget es, die ihr erlöst seid durch den Herrn

(Recitative & Aria)

Sing ye praise, all ye redeemed of the Lord,
Redeemed from the hand of the foe,
From your distresses, from deep affliction,
Who sat in the shadow of death and darkness.
All ye that cry in trouble unto the Lord,
Sing ye praise!
Give ye thanks, proclaim aloud his goodness.
He counteth all your sorrows in the time of need.
He comforts the bereaved with His regard.
Sing ye praise!
Give ye thanks, proclaim aloud His goodness.

3. Sagt es, die ihr erlöst seid vor dem Herrn

(Chorus)

All ye that cried unto the Lord,
In distress and deep affliction,
He counteth all your sorrows
In the time of need.
Sing ye praise!
Give ye thanks, proclaim aloud His goodness.

4. Ich harrete des Herrn

(Duet & Chorus)

I waited for the Lord,
He inclined unto me,
He heard my complaint.
O bless'd are they that hope and trust in the Lord,
O bless'd are they that hope and trust in Him.

5. Strick des Todes hatten uns umfassen

(Solo)

The sorrows of death had closed all around me,
And Hell's dark terrors had got hold upon me,
With trouble and deep heaviness.
But, said the Lord, Come, arise from the dead,
And awake, thou that sleepest!
I bring thee salvation.
We called thro' the darkness,
Watchman, will the night soon pass?
The Watchman only said:
Though the morning will come, the night will come also.
Ask ye if ye will, enquire ye, return again, ask;
Watchman, will the night soon pass?
The night is departing.

6. Die Nacht ist vergangen

(Chorus)

The night is departing, the day is approaching,
Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness,
And let us gird on the armor of light.

7. Nun danket alle Gott

(translation, Catherine Winkworth)

(Chorus)

Now thank we all our God,
with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
in Whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all ills,
in this world and the next!

8. Drum sing' ich mit meinem Liede

(Duet)

My song shall be always Thy mercy,
Singing Thy praise, Thou only God,
Ever Thy praise, O God.
My tongue ever speaks the goodness
Thou hast done unto me.
I wander in night, and foulest darkness,
And mine enemies stand threat'ning around,
Yet call'd I upon the name of the Lord,
And He redeemed me with watchful goodness.

9. Ihr Völker! bringet her dem Herrn Ehre und Macht

(Chorus)

Ye nations, offer to the Lord glory and might.
Thou heaven, offer to the Lord glory and might.
Ye monarchs, offer to the Lord glory and might.
The whole earth, offer to the Lord glory and might.
O give thanks to the Lord,
Praise Him, all ye people,
And ever praise His holy name.
Sing ye the Lord, and ever praise His holy name.
All that has life and breath, sing to the Lord:
Hallelujah

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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 Director of Music Ministries at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Louisville, Kentucky. He has served parishes in Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, and North Carolina and has taught in schools in Kentucky and North Carolina. Walker most recently 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.



PHILIP BRISSON, Louisville Master Chorale's Associate and Accompanist, is Director of Music and Organist at the Cathedral of the Assumption in downtown Louisville, the country's oldest inland Catholic cathedral in continuous use. In addition to leading the Cathedral's traditional worship, he manages the Cathedral's Keltie Endowed Concert Series and has led the Cathedral Choirs in this country and on concert tours in Europe. Prior to his work with the LMC, he was Chorusmaster for the Kentucky Opera and prepared choruses for performances of works ranging from Verdi to Floyd. As a teacher, Dr. Brisson has served on the faculties of Bellarmine University and Indiana University Southeast. Brisson has a BM in Organ Performance from the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, CUNY, a Master's Degree in Sacred Music from Westminster Choir College and a Doctorate in Organ Performance from the Eastman School of Music.

As an organ soloist, he has given recitals in 35 states and has appeared with the Louisville Orchestra as guest soloist. Brisson is active in the American Guild of Organists and also founded the concert artist cooperative EastWestOrganists.com, which represents several prominent young American organists.



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.

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SOLOISTS



STACY SIMPSON, *trumpet*, has performed with orchestras and ensembles throughout America and overseas. She has received numerous awards and competitions during her career and today maintains a full trumpet studio. She has held the position of Adjunct Trumpet Instructor at University of Kentucky and Associate Instructor of Trumpet at Indiana University (Bloomington). Currently, she is professor of trumpet at Bellarmine University. Ms. Simpson received her Bachelor's of Music degree in trumpet performance from the University of Louisville, where she was a student of Michael Tunnell.



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 directs the Treble Choir at Calvary Episcopal Church.



JASMINE DAVIS, *soprano*, received her Masters degree in vocal performance from the University of Louisville in 2012 where she studied with Edith Davis Tidwell. While at the University of Louisville she performed full roles that included Beatrice from Berlioz's *Beatrice et Benedict* and Fiordiligi from Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. As a Kentucky Opera Studio Artist for the 2011-2012 season, Jasmine covered main stage roles in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and in Bizet's *Carmen*. She maintains a studio of over twenty voice students in Louisville.



WILLIAM 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.



ZACHARY JAMES CAVAN, *bass*, received his Bachelor's degree in Music at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and his Masters in Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Louisville, where he studied under Daniel Weeks. He sings with the Kentucky Opera Chorus, the Louisville Master Chorale and St. Francis in the Fields.

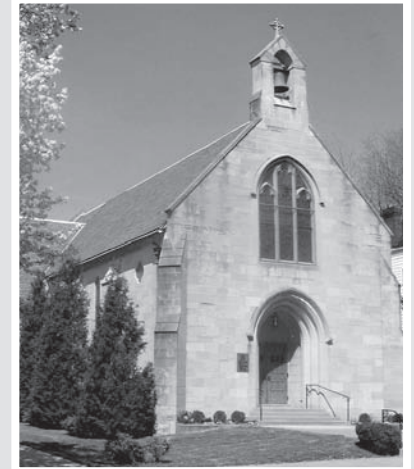
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PROGRAM NOTES

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Five Mystical Songs*

Vaughan Williams was born in the village of Down Ampney, Gloucestershire, where his father was the vicar. His mother was the daughter of Josiah Wedgwood III and Caroline Sarah Darwin, sister of Charles Darwin. When Ralph was two years old, his father died and his mother moved with her three children to her family home, Leith Hill Place in the Surrey Hills. There is a family story that after the publication of *The Origin of the Species*, Ralph, who was around seven, asked his mother what all the fuss was about. She is supposed to have told him, “The Bible tells us that God made the world in six days. Great-uncle Charles thinks it took rather longer. But we needn’t worry — it is equally wonderful either way.” In 1944 Vaughan Williams donated Leith Hill Place to the National Trust, and it was opened to the public in 2013.

Vaughan Williams experienced a rich musical life in the Wedgwood home. His aunt taught him piano and helped him work through a book entitled *A Child’s Introduction to Thorough Bass*. He began violin lessons when he was seven. When he was fourteen, he was sent away to school at Charterhouse where, among other activities, he was allowed to practice on the chapel organ. According to biographer Simon Heffer, by the time Vaughan Williams left the school he had become an atheist. Thus in 1899 when the vicar at St. Barnabas’s decided that the organist should take communion, Vaughan Williams resigned. Since, as he put it himself late in his life, he was born “with a very small silver spoon” in his mouth, he didn’t need the income from a church organist’s job, and quitting gave him more time to pursue his real passions: promoting nationalism in English music, encouraging amateur musicians, studying the music of Tudor England, collecting English folk songs, and composing.

By the time he was asked to edit the music for *The English Hymnal*, his atheism had become a less principled agnosticism and the work on the hymnal became for him, as Simon Heffer puts it, “a project of cultural, not religious, evangelism.” (His second wife is reported to have said, “He was far too deeply absorbed by music to feel any need of religious observance.”) Work on *The English Hymnal* was also for Vaughan Williams a valuable learning experience and a labor of love. Not only did it enrich his understanding of the history of English music, but he found that many tunes from the English folksongs he had collected made very good hymn tunes. Vaughan Williams also wrote several new hymn tunes for the book himself, among them *Down Ampney* (“Come down, O love divine”), *Salve Festa Dies* (“Hail thee, Festival Day”), and *Sine Nomine* (“For All the Saints”). The *Episcopal Hymnal 1982 Companion* calls *Sine Nomine* “one of the great hymn tunes of this century” and adds, “The ‘alleluias’ . . . show [Vaughan Williams’s] way of introducing variety in the rhythm of his tunes and thus avoiding monotony, particularly in such a long hymn.”

His interest in the history of English music, and Tudor English music in particular, led him to the work of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English poets, among them George Herbert (1593-1633). And this brings us to the *Five Mystical Songs* of 1911, a setting of five poems by Herbert for baritone, chorus, and orchestra.

George Herbert grew up in an aristocratic family related to the Earls of Pembroke. His father died when George was four years old, and he, his six brothers, and three sisters were left in the care of their mother. George’s older brother Edward became 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury and George Herbert himself could have had a career at court or in politics. He did, in fact, serve in parliament in 1624 and 1625. But for his life’s work he chose instead to take holy orders and enter the Anglican priesthood. He served a small parish in Bemerton, cared for his parishioners faithfully, and wrote poetry. In 1626, his friend Nicholas Ferrar established a religious community in Little Gidding, and on his deathbed Herbert sent Ferrar a manuscript of his poetry, asking him to publish the manuscript or burn it. Ferrar published the manuscript, *The Temple*, in 1633. (T. S. Eliot celebrated Ferrar’s religious community in the final poem of his *Four Quartets* [1935-1942]: “You are here to kneel / Where prayer has been valid.”)

George Herbert’s mother, Lady Magdalen Herbert, was a friend and patron of the poet John Donne (1572-1631), who dedicated his *Divine Poems* to her. Donne’s poetry influenced a number of poets in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries who, along with Donne, are referred to as “metaphysical poets.” The title itself comes from a somewhat snide comment made by John Dryden that Donne “affects the metaphysics...and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy...” Our tastes in poetry change, of course, and contemporary poets and critics appreciate Donne’s poetry (and George Herbert’s) a great deal more than Dryden did in 1693.

A prominent characteristic of metaphysical poetry is yoking two completely unrelated things into one metaphor or image. Perhaps the most famous example of this is John Donne’s describing his separation from his wife when he took a trip to the continent in 1611 as being like the two arms of a drawing compass: they separate, one arm stays fixed while the other draws a circle, and then they come together again (“A Valediction Forbidding Mourning”).

The first two poems in Vaughan Williams’s setting demonstrate Herbert’s ability to use form and rhythm to connect the reader’s experience of the poem with his or her understanding of it. The first poem, “Easter,” consists of three six-line stanzas, but the second and fourth lines are much shorter than the first and third. This is a poem about resurrection, and the effect of an iambic pentameter line (5 beats, 10 syllables) followed by a line of iambic dimeter (2 beats, 4 syllables) is to create a metrical sense, a bodily sensation, of rising up. This sense is reinforced of course by the language: “Rise, heart...” which the poem connects to the resurrection: “thy Lord is risen ...” Vaughan Williams uses rising melodic figures throughout to reinforce the sense of the words, from the soloist’s voice followed by the chorus in the first measures to the triumphant pianissimo ending of the piece.

The second poem that Vaughan Williams sets is called in the score “I Got Me Flowers.” The form of this poem (three alternate-rhyming quatrains of iambic tetrameter) is very different from that of “Easter”. In early editions of Herbert’s poetry these verses are presented as part of the poem “Easter.” In later editions it is sometimes called “The Song,” i.e. the song anticipated in the last stanza of “Easter,” when his risen heart and his awakened lute “Consort ...and twist a song / Pleasant and long.” Just so does the vocal melody in Vaughan Williams’s setting.

Of the five poems that Vaughan Williams set in *Five Mystical Songs*, the third one, “Love Bade me Welcome,” most clearly fits the description of a metaphysical poem. Love (in Herbert’s poetry always Divine Love) is personified as the host of a dinner to which the poet is a reluctant guest who feels himself unworthy. Understanding the guest’s discomfort, Love takes entire responsibility for who he is and what he is. Love invites the guest to “sit down . . . and taste my meat.” The guest expresses his acceptance of this grace in the simplest language imaginable: “So I did sit and eat.” The piece begins with a questioning figure in the clarinets, but Love’s quiet, confident answers are suggested by the strings throughout. Vaughan Williams may have been an agnostic, but his music is always true in the *Five Mystical Songs* to the faith he found in George Herbert’s poetry. This poem is central to Herbert’s faith in that it embodies the mystery and significance of the incarnation. And Vaughan Williams placed this movement at the center of his *Five Mystical Songs*.

The fourth poem, “The Call,” is an invocation. This movement belongs entirely to the soloist, and it is the most directly personal. In its repetition of the melody it might seem the simplest of the set as well, the most like a folksong, but Vaughan Williams makes sure that rhythmically things are not as simple as they seem.

The last poem in Vaughn Williams’s piece is a glorious celebration, an English version of the call in Psalm 150 to praise the Lord in song. The stanzas take us from the heavens to the earth, to the church, and finally to the heart, which “must bear the longest part.” Each stanza is surrounded by the antiphon, hence the title of the poem. Vaughan Williams did write a setting of this poem for baritone solo, but only if there is no chorus. The movement belongs to the chorus and the orchestra. And, of course, to all the world.

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN: *Trumpet Concerto in E♭ Major*

According to biographers H. C. Robbins Landon and David Wyn Jones, Joseph Haydn was the most popular and best loved musician in all Europe, “*during his lifetime*” (italics theirs). Throughout the continent, people felt that “Haydn’s language was their language.” What was the secret of his success? “The combination of popular language and forms (e.g. the rondo with its catchy, returning tune), together with a highly professional approach and a marked bent for intellectual exploitation of the given material.”

In his long life, Haydn composed (among many other works) 108 symphonies, 83 string quartets, 43 keyboard trios, 3 oratorios, 14 masses, 13 Italian operas, 53 keyboard sonatas, and arrangements for 272 songs. He composed 12 concertos for keyboard, and 12 concertos for other instruments. His last concerto, and possibly the last orchestral work he composed, is the *Trumpet Concerto in E♭*. It has become his most popular concerto and one of the best known, most easily recognized pieces he ever wrote.

Haydn did not write much for the trumpet, primarily because of the limitations of the natural instrument, a simple straight tube of brass flared at the end to create a bell, and, after some time in the 13th or 14th century, made more compact (without shortening the overall length of the tube) by one or more U-bends. By putting her lips to a mouthpiece and making what in any other context would be a rude noise, the trumpet player creates a vibrating column of air which produces a resonant musical sound at the bell end of the instrument. The pitch of that sound is determined by the length of the vibrating column of air. Just as shortening a vibrating string produces a higher pitch, shortening the column of air in a brass tube produces a higher fundamental pitch. Changing the length of a vibrating string is easy. Woodwind instrument makers had solved the problem of controlling the length of the column of air in their instruments by boring holes along the length of the instrument and then covering or opening holes in different combinations.

Which is exactly what Viennese trumpet player Anton Weidinger began trying in the 1790s. His arrangement of holes and pads to cover them must have looked something like a horizontal saxophone. But it worked, at least to some extent. Weidinger travelled across Europe demonstrating his “organisirte Trompete.” Other instrument makers copied it. Haydn wrote his concerto for the instrument in 1796, but Weidinger did not play the concerto in public for the first time until March of 1800. His design was superseded, beginning in 1818, with the invention of the lengthening valve which instead of shortening or lengthening a single column of air used valves and arrangements of U-shaped tubes (“crooks”) in order to create, in effect, several tubes, each one a different length. And this creates a truly chromatic instrument.

Haydn’s concerto is in three movements: an allegro first movement, a lyrical slow movement, and then an allegro finale. It takes a modern trumpet to do Haydn’s music justice, and in this piece the player gets to exhibit almost everything the trumpet is capable of: brilliant tone, lovely legato, and stirring virtuosity.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN: Hymn of Praise

In 1840 all of Germany celebrated the 400th anniversary of Johann Gutenberg's invention of a printing press with movable type. Nowhere was the celebration larger or more elaborate than in Leipzig, where the thirty-one-year-old Felix Mendelssohn was director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. For the three-day festival, Mendelssohn wrote two works: a four-part *Festgesang zum Gutenbergfest* for two brass choirs and a male chorus, to be performed outdoors in the Leipzig Marktplatz, and his *Lobgesang*, which was premiered in the Thomaskirche on June 25th.

Felix Mendelssohn, by 1840, was one of the most famous and admired musicians in Europe. His Jewish paternal grandfather, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), was famous for his intelligence, his philosophical writings, and his defense of religious freedom. Moses Mendelssohn had three daughters and three sons. His eldest, Brendel, changed her name to Dorothea when she left the husband her father had arranged for her to marry, had herself baptized a protestant, and took up with and then married Friedrich Schlegel (brother of the translator of Shakespeare). Dorothea was the wild one in the family, but when Felix married she was the only one in his immediate family to attend the wedding.

Moses Mendelssohn's two oldest sons, Joseph and Abraham, established a very successful banking firm, first in Hamburg and then, in 1812, in Berlin. Abraham was Felix Mendelssohn's father. He and his wife Lea Salomon had their four children baptized Lutherans when Felix was seven. Six years later Abraham and his wife converted and, in response to pressure from Lea's brother, added Bartholdy to their last name. Felix Mendelssohn grew up a devout Christian. But he honored the Jewish heritage of his grandfather, though he suffered to some extent because of it during his lifetime. And when the Nazis came to power in the 1930s they made playing Mendelssohn's music illegal.

In November of 1821, Carl Friedrich Zelter, Felix's principal music tutor, took his twelve-year-old protégé to Weimar to meet Goethe. Writing ahead to the great poet, Zelter described Felix as "the son of a Jew but not a Jew." According to Mendelssohn's biographer R. Larry Todd, Goethe hosted a party the purpose of which was to "test . . . the prodigy's abilities to stimulate comparisons with Mozart." After improvising at the piano, playing a Bach fugue, a minuet from Don Giovanni, and the overture to The Marriage of Figaro, Mendelssohn was asked by the great man to sight read from two manuscripts that he owned, one by Mozart and one by Beethoven. Felix Mendelssohn's son Karl, in his 1871 book *Goethe und Mendelssohn*, reports that Goethe said comparing the abilities of Mendelssohn at twelve to Mozart at seven (which was when Goethe had heard him perform) was like comparing "the cultivated talk of a grown up person . . . to the prattle of a child."

Age and time may have colored this judgment. Goethe was only twelve when he heard Mozart play. Sixty years later, at seventy-two, he heard Felix Mendelssohn. And Mendelssohn was five years older than Mozart had been. But there is no question that Mendelssohn was a remarkable prodigy. He wrote what is probably his third most well-known piece, the *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when he was only seventeen. The other two of Mendelssohn's top three take us back to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and to the Gutenbergfest of 1840.

One of them (rank them yourself) is the Wedding March from the incidental music Mendelssohn wrote for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, staged to honor the king of Prussia's birthday, October 14, 1843. The director of the production was Ludwig Tieck, but the translation of the play into German had been done by August Wilhelm Schlegel (brother of the second husband of Felix's Aunt Dorothea). It's the music played often now as the newly wedded couple turn joyfully away from the altar and into their new life together.

The other of Mendelssohn's top three is a tune he wrote for the second movement of his *Festgesang zum Gutenbergfest*, celebrating the fatherland, Gutenberg, the light that the Protestant Reformation brought into the world, and Gutenberg's Bible as a carrier of that light. A year later, Mendelssohn asked a friend in England to find English words for it, suggesting "I am sure [the] piece will be liked very much by the singers and the hearers, but it will *never* do to sacred words." In 1856, almost a decade after Felix Mendelssohn's death, an English organist used the tune to set a Christmas hymn by Charles Wesley, "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing."

The *Festgesang* anticipates the *Lobgesang* in that they both celebrate light after great darkness. Sometime in the mid to late 1830s, Mendelssohn began work on what he intended to be a symphony. Partly inspired by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and partly by the necessity of a choral work for the Gutenberg festival, he added to his three-part instrumental symphony another nine parts of choral music. The work was immensely popular during Mendelssohn's lifetime, but it has suffered by what some conceive as an awkward attempt to imitate Beethoven. Nothing could be farther from the truth, and a close examination of the instrumental and the choral music will make clear that Mendelssohn thought of them as a unified work. However, soon after the work was premiered, Robert Schumann in his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* suggested performing the instrumental and the choral movements as separate works. Mendelssohn began calling the work a "Symphony-Cantata." (It is also known as his 2nd Symphony.)

R. Larry Todd concludes in his monumental biography, *Mendelssohn: a Life in Music*, that "If the *Lobgesang* failed, it did so not by emulating the Ninth but by aspiring toward an unattainable comprehensiveness—a symphony-*cum*-cantata with the trappings of a sacred service, a concert piece created for a specific occasion but reaching toward musical universality."

In the nine choral parts of the *Lobgesang*, Mendelssohn takes us from brightness deep into darkness and then back up to light and joy. This journey is reflected, not just in words from the Old and New Testaments; not just with the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic structure of the nine movements; but also with the key in which each movement is set as well. The first movement, “All men, all things, all that have life and breath” is in B♭ major, as is the second part of that movement, “Praise ye the Lord O ye Spirit”. The second movement, “Sing ye praise, all ye redeemed of the Lord,” is in G minor, a descent of a third from the opening movement. The third movement, “All ye that cried unto the Lord,” begins in G minor. The fourth movement, “I waited for the Lord,” is in E♭ major, another descent of a third. The fifth movement, “The sorrows of death had closed all around me,” is in C minor. This is the darkest movement of the entire piece. With the sixth movement this descent through the major and minor keys reverses: “The night is departing” is in D major, and the movement ends with radiant exaltation. It is followed by the very familiar “Nun danket,” in G major, the first sixteen measures sung *a capella*. The last two movements, “My song shall be alway thy mercy” and “Ye nations offer to the Lord,” return us to the key of B♭ major.

In September of 1840 Mendelssohn took part in a music festival in Birmingham, England, where he conducted the *Lobgesang*. The composer Ignaz Moscheles, a close friend of Mendelssohn’s, said that when the “Nun danket alle Gott” began the audience “rose involuntarily from their seats—a custom usually confined in England to the performance of the Hallelujah Chorus.” While Mendelssohn was in England, his English publisher J. Alfred Novello bought the rights to publish the *Lobgesang* in England. He translated Mendelssohn’s German text into English, which with the exception of one movement is the text we will sing.

A note about “Nun danket Alle Gott”: The German words were written by Martin Rinkart around 1636. Johann Crüger wrote the tune in 1647. Bach used Rinkart’s words set to Crüger’s tune in two cantatas (BWV 79 & 192). And Felix Mendelssohn used the tune and the words in 1840 in both his *Festgesang zum Gutenbergfest* and his *Lobgesang*. J. Alfred Novello translated the words into English when he bought the English publishing rights of the *Lobgesang*. But a decade after Novello’s translation, Catherine Winkworth composed the translation we know and love. Lovers of Bach’s music know his two cantatas, but it is Mendelssohn’s arrangement from the *Lobgesang* and Catherine Winkworth’s words that we find in most modern English hymnals.

Program Notes by Millard Dunn



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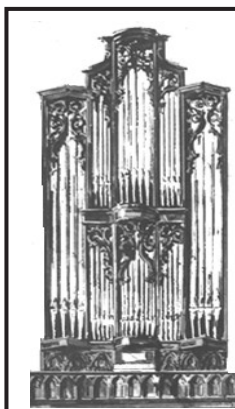
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