

Program Notes December 2011

– by Cathy Wolfson

A Christmas Carol (All Men Draw Near) – The famous Hungarian composer Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) was an ethnomusicologist of Hungarian and Eastern European folksong, avid composer, lifelong friend of Béla Bartók, and champion of music education methodology for elementary and middle school age children. This lilting carol, an unassuming description of Christ's birth, is based upon a traditional Hungarian carol, which is common for most of Kodály's choral compositions.

Ave Maria – Javier Busto Sagrado, an internationally-known choral composer and conductor, was born in the Basque country of Spain in 1949. A man of many talents, he graduated as a medical doctor from Vallodolid University in Spain. This is a lovely, contemplative arrangement of *Ave Maria* with shimmering harmonies. If you listen closely, you will detect Busto's homage to Franz Schubert's well-known rendition of *Ave Maria*.

<i>Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum,</i>	<i>Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,</i>
<i>Benedicta tu in mulieribus,</i>	<i>Blessed art thou among women,</i>
<i>Et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.</i>	<i>And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.</i>
<i>Sancta Maria, mater Dei,</i>	<i>Holy Mary, mother of God,</i>
<i>Ora pro nobis peccatoribus,</i>	<i>Pray for us sinners,</i>
<i>Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.</i>	<i>Now and in the hour of our death. Amen.</i>

There is No Rose of Such Virtue – Born in 1951, Michael Larkin is both faculty chair of the voice department and voice teacher at the Wilmington School of Music in Delaware. He is also Director of Music Ministry at St. Mary Anne's Episcopal Church. Larkin is known nationally as a clinician in various aspects of vocal/choral and church music, and is well respected as a composer of both sacred and choral music. The text of *There is No Rose* has been arranged by several choral composers through the years; each one seems to elicit beautiful, lyrical melody lines with lush harmonies. Larkin's arrangement is no exception.

Christus – Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847) was a prolific composer despite his short life. His family was Jewish but he was raised a Christian by his converted father. He knew Goethe and Schumann, and was a mentor to the famous Swedish soprano Jenny Lind. Based on biblical text, *Christus* was intended to be part of an oratorio that Mendelssohn never finished. As you listen to this piece, you can hear musical idioms that demonstrate Mendelssohn's influence on compositions by Brahms.

<i>Christus</i>	<i>Christ</i>
<i>Da Jesus geboren ward zu Bethlehem</i>	<i>Jesus was born in Bethlehem</i>
<i>Im Jüdischen Lande,</i>	<i>In Judea,</i>
<i>Da kamen die Weisen vom Morgenlande</i>	<i>There came the Wise Men from the morning land</i>
<i>Gen Jerusalem und beteten ihn an.</i>	<i>To Jerusalem and to worship him.</i>

<i>Wo ist der neugeborne Knig der Juden?</i>	<i>Where is the newborn King of the Jews?</i>
<i>Wir haben seinen stern gesehen,</i>	<i>We have seen his star,</i>
<i>Und sind gekommen ihn anzubeten,</i>	<i>And have come to worship him.</i>

<i>Es wird ein stern aus Jacob aufgehn</i>	<i>It was a star which rose out of Jacob</i>
<i>Und ein Scepter aus Israel kommen.</i>	<i>And a scepter came from Israel.</i>
<i>Der wird zerschmetterten fürsten und städte.</i>	<i>Rulers and rules were smashed.</i>
<i>Was schön leuchtet der Morgenstern!</i>	<i>How beautifully shines the Morning Star!</i>
<i>O welch' ein Glanz gebt auf vom Herrn,</i>	<i>Like the brilliance which the Lord gives forth,</i>
<i>Uns licht und trost zu geben!</i>	<i>To give to us light and comfort!</i>
<i>Dein wort, Jesu, is die klarheit,</i>	<i>Thy word, Jesus, is clarity,</i>
<i>Führt zur wahrheit und zum leben.</i>	<i>That guides with truth to life.</i>
<i>Wer kann dich genug erheben?</i>	<i>Who can exalt you enough?</i>

Weihnachten – This sprightly motet, also by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartoldy, celebrates the promise of Christ's birth, and is one of six motets intended for various parts of the Christian liturgical year.

<i>Weihnachten</i>	<i>Christmas</i>
<i>Frohloeket, ihr Völker auf Erden, und</i>	<i>Rejoice, you people on Earth, and praise God!</i>
<i>preiset Gott!</i>	
<i>Der Heiland ist erchienen, den der Herr</i>	<i>Heaven has appeared, as the Lord promised.</i>
<i>verbeissen.</i>	
<i>Er hat seine Gerechtigkeit der Welt</i>	<i>He has bestowed his righteousness upon the world.</i>
<i>offenbaret.</i>	
<i>Halleluja!</i>	<i>Hallelujah!</i>

Saw You Never – Don Michael Dicie, b. 1941, is a composer and arranger of sacred songs, carols, and hymns. He is the organist and composer in residence at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Franklin, Tennessee. This is his lovely, transparent arrangement of a traditional 15th century French melody.

A Christmas Carol – Dello Joio (1913 – 2008) was born in New York to Italian immigrants and began his career as an organist and choir master at age 14. He studied with Paul Hindemith and worked with choreographer Martha Graham as well as being actively involved in various opera productions. The words in this piece are by G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), an English writer who took well-known proverbs and adages and turned them 'inside out.' This is a gorgeous, lullaby-like rendition of Chesterton's poem envisioning the Christ child lying on Mary's lap or at her knee.

Angel's Carol – John Rutter was born in London in 1945. In 1981 he founded the Cambridge Singers, which he continues to conduct. His prolific choral and orchestral work reflect influences by Holst, Britten, Howells, and other British composers, as well as Durufle and Fauré. In this pleasing carol, Rutter describes the angels' visit to the shepherds, alerting them of Jesus' birth by using his characteristic placement of the melody in different vocal parts throughout the piece with accompanying obligati in the other voices.

Lux Aurumque – Eric Whitacre, born in 1970 in Reno, Nevada, is currently one of the most popular composers in the classical choral genre. Whitacre is presently the composer-in-residence at Cambridge University in England. He is also famous for bringing together voices from all over the world in simultaneous 'virtual' performances on You Tube. He uses pure, ethereal harmonies throughout *Lux Aurumque* to illuminate a vision of the newborn Christ.

<i>Lux Aurumque</i>	<i>Light of Gold</i>
<i>Lux, calida gravisque,</i>	<i>Light, warm and heavy,</i>
<i>Pura velut aurum,</i>	<i>As pure gold,</i>
<i>Et canunt angeli</i>	<i>As the angels sing</i>
<i>Molliter modo natum.</i>	<i>Softly to the newborn babe.</i>

Glory to God in the Highest – During his lifetime, Randall Thompson (1899-1984) was one of the most widely-performed and prolific choral composers of his generation. His most recognizable choral work is the anthem, *Alleluia*, commissioned for the opening of the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood. *Glory to God in the Highest*, written in 1958, is a joyous exaltation of God, propelled by driving rhythms and a lilting melody.

Hodie Christus Natus Est — Ariel Quintana, is a native of Argentina who began playing the piano at the age of 3. After earning a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Argentina with an emphasis in piano performance and additional study in composition choral conducting, he came to the U.S. with his wife, mezzo soprano Helene Urigu, and settled in California. Quintana joined the Los Angeles Masterworks Chorale under the direction of Paul Salomonovich who conducted some of his works, including the premiere of his *Hodie Christus Natus Est* in December, 2000. An accomplished musician, conductor, composer, arranger and pianist, Quintana is currently finishing the Doctoral Program in Conducting at the University of Southern California. *Hodie Christus Natus Est* is written for double choir, with divisi in all parts, offering rich and exultant harmonies alternating with chant-like melody lines to describe Christ’s birth.

Hodie Christus Natus Est

Today Christ is Born

Away in a Manger — Brant Adams was born in 1955 in Ohio. He has a doctorate in composition from the University of Texas, Austin, and is currently coordinator of music and theory at Oklahoma State University. He sets this traditional carol in a lovely, simple arrangement with interesting harmonies. The last three measures, however, are a somewhat amusing departure from the rest of the piece, with their suggestion of jazz harmonies.

Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella — Although Stephen Chatman, born in 1950, is Canadian, he studied composition at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio and received a Fulbright grant for study with Karlheinz Stockhausen in Cologne, Germany. He is a professor and Head of Composition at the University of British Columbia, where he started as their first composer in residence in 1976. This traditional carol, *Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella*, was originally sung in the Provençal tongue, based upon a drinking song composed by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, for performances of Molière’s *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* in 1866. This lively setting alternates the melody in different vocal parts throughout the piece, with the other parts providing pizzicato accompaniment with syllables of “doh” or “doo.”

The Ship Carol — Stephen Paulus was born in 1949 in New Jersey, but has lived in Minnesota since he was two years old. Many choral groups, including the Robert Shaw Chorale and the Dale Warland Singers, have commissioned works by Paulus. In *The Ship Carol*, Paulus sets this anonymous 16th century tune with interesting harmonies reminiscent of the joyous pealing of bells on Christmas Day.

O Little Town of Bethlehem — In this version of *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, Stephen Paulus alternates melody lines with four-part harmonies and sparse harp accompaniment to represent the simple sacredness of this traditional, well-known Christmas carol.

On Christmas Night All Christians Sing — Howard Helvey (b. 1968) earned his doctorate in composition and piano performance from the College Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati. The joyous setting of this traditional carol uses a 4-hand piano accompaniment. It also alternates melody lines among different choral parts, with vocal obligati in the other voices, and an alternate setting of the melody in canon for one verse.

The Twelve Days of Christmas — This famous tune, first published in England in 1780, is possibly based upon an earlier French carol. It was arranged for the King’s Singers by Geoffrey Keating, who has a Masters in Music from Oxford and is currently a lecturer at Glasgow University. His sprightly, humorous setting weaves the traditional melody among various choral parts, while the other parts provide vocal accompaniment. Listen for brief insertions of passages from other well-known choral works. Can you guess what they are?

Winds through the Olive Trees — Robert Wetzler, born in 1932, has served as choirmaster for various churches in Pennsylvania and Minnesota, and has received numerous composer awards from ASCAP. *Winds through the Olive Trees* is a lovely and loving description of Jesus’ birth, with choral obligati that represent the sound of the wind.

Spanish Carol — Andrew Carter (b. 1939) is an English-born composer, conductor, singer and workshop leader whose music is performed worldwide. He travels extensively throughout the U.S., Europe, Australia and New Zealand and was composer in residence at St. Olaf College in Minnesota during 2008. His setting of this traditional Spanish carol is just plain fun! Although this piece is sung *a cappella*, one can almost hear a guitarron being played and slapped as accompaniment.

*Esta noche nace un Niño entre la escarcha
y el hielo.*

*Quien pudiera, Niño mio, vestirte de
terciopelo.*

Alerí, alerí, alería, alerí, alerí, que placer!

*Esta noche, nace un Niño en el portal
de Belén.*

*La Virgen està lavando con un poco de jabón.
Se le picaron las manos, manos de mi
corazón.*

Alerí, etc.

*This night was born a Child between the frost
and the ice.*

*Who would like, oh my Child, to clothe you in
velvet.*

Aleri, aleri, aleria, aleri, aleri, what delight!

*This night, was born a Child in the crèche in
Bethlehem.*

*The Virgin was washing with a little bit of soap.
If the hands are pierced, the hands of my heart.*

Aleri, etc.

Angels We Have Heard on High — Stephen Chatman ‘ramps up’ the joy in this traditional carol, interweaving familiar melody lines with energetic, surprising harmonies. Chapman’s arrangement of the text ‘Gloria in Excelsis,’ in particular, is a powerful *tour de force*.

Ave Maria (Angelus Domini) — Franz Biebl was born in 1906 in Pursruck, Germany. His was a large family; he was the 11th child. Biebl held various choral conducting positions in Germany and Austria, and, curiously enough, spent a few years as a prisoner of war in the United States, during and after World War II, where he was allowed to compose and conduct. He reported that the food was quite decent! *Ave Maria*, his best-known composition, is a tender and exultant setting of this well-known prayer, with beautiful and inspirational harmonies.

*Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae,
Et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.*

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

Maria dixit: Ecce ancilla Domini,

Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.

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

*Et verbum caro factum est
Et habitavit in nobis.*

*Sancta Maria, mater Dei,
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.*

*The angel of the Lord announced to Mary,
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.*

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.*

*Mary said: Behold, I am the handmaiden of
the Lord,*

Be it to me according to thy word.

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,
Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.*

*And the dear Word was made
And dwelt among us.*

*Holy Mary, mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and in the hour of our death. Amen.*