

Christmas with the Choral Society

Saturday, December 13, 2008

***Arise, Your Light Has Come*; David Danner**

We open tonight's concert with ***Arise, Your Light Has Come*** by arranger **David Danner** (1951-1993). It was premiered before thousands of choral directors at the Hallelujah Amen Service during the 1989 National ACDA Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. This colorful arrangement, based on the hymn tune, *Wachet Auf* quickly gained popularity and has subsequently been performed by many choirs.

***Magnificat*; Antonio Vivaldi**

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), nicknamed "The Red Priest," was an ordained Venetian priest as well as a famous virtuoso violinist and Baroque composer. Well known for his four violin concertos known as *The Four Seasons*, Vivaldi produced a wide array of instrumental and sacred choral music during his lifetime. His ***Magnificat***, the beloved text spoken by Mary upon realizing she was to bear the Son of God, reflects a joyful exuberance present in many of Vivaldi's works.

***Laudamus Te*; Francis Poulenc**

French composer **Francis Poulenc** (1899-1963) produced his first major sacred work, *Gloria*, in 1936. The text of its second movement, ***Laudamus Te***, is set playfully, with harmonic and rhythmic challenges. When critics confronted Poulenc suggesting the music bordered on sacrilege, Poulenc responded, "While writing it I had in mind those Crozzoli frescoes with angels sticking out their tongues, and also some solemn-looking Benedictine monks that I saw playing football one day."

***For Unto Us a Child is Born*; George Frideric Handel**

Drawing on the text of Isaiah 9:6, **George Frideric Handel** (1685-1759) wrote ***For Unto Us a Child is Born*** as part of his sacred oratorio *Messiah*. This chorus rejoices in the reality of Isaiah's prophetic words foretelling the birth of Jesus Christ. The text proclaims that Christ will govern and that He shall be called "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

***Gloria*; Dominick Argento**

Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Dominick Argento** (b. 1927), known for his lyric operas, was a member of the faculty at the University of Minnesota from 1958 to 1997. He has written thirteen operas, most of which have been performed in both Europe and the United States. ***Gloria*** is taken from his opera *The Masque of Angels*. It highlights the power and colors of the human voice. Argento is currently completing work on a new masterwork for chorus, soloists and orchestra, which will be premiered at the 2009 ACDA National Convention.

***Dona Nobis Pacem*; Johann Sebastian Bach**

Dona Nobis Pacem is the final movement of the famed *Mass in B Minor* by **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750). While sections of the mass were first composed for diplomatic reasons in 1733, Bach dedicated the next several years to expanding and completing his masterwork. The

mass was never performed in its entirety during the composer's lifetime. However, many scholars assert that Bach composed the *Mass in B Minor* primarily as an art form reflecting true reverence and devotion. Today it is considered by many to be one of the greatest achievements in classical music.

***Keresimesi Qdun De O*; arr. Wendell Whalum**

African-American composer, author and educator **Wendell Whalum** (1931-1987) is best known for his role as director of the internationally recognized Morehouse College Glee Club for over three decades. With its lively, upbeat character, his arrangement of the traditional Nigerian Christmas song ***Keresimesi Qdun De O*** is an example of his unique ability to convey the beauty and power of the African spiritual.

***Sir Christemas*; William Mathias**

William Mathias (1934-1992) is one of the most recognized composers in late twentieth-century England. Perhaps best known for the anthem he composed for the wedding of The Prince and Princess of Wales in 1981, Mathias has created compositions ranging from operas and concertos to a large collection of choral music. One such choral piece, ***Sir Christemas***, represents Mathias' quest for originality in his work. With its distinct rhythms and use of English and French text, *Sir Christemas* offers variety and appeal to any holiday concert.

***There is No Rose*; Z. Randall Stroope**

Conductor and composer **Z. Randal Stroope** (b. 1953), currently serves as Director of Choral Studies at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. Stroope has published several musical works and toured extensively with choral groups both nationally and internationally. Based on a fifteenth-century carol, Stroope's ***There is No Rose*** was commissioned for Bel Canto in Omaha, Nebraska.

***Ding Dong! Merrily On High*; Howard Helvey**

The traditional French carol ***Ding Dong! Merrily On High*** comes alive in this arrangement for men's voices by **Howard Helvey** (b.1968). As an active composer, arranger and pianist, Helvey draws on his extensive background in piano performance to create a clever backdrop to this well known Christmas carol. Helvey currently lives in Cincinnati, Ohio where he serves as organist/choirmaster at the Calvary Episcopal Church.

***The Holly and the Ivy*; arr. John Rutter**

Tonight's arrangement of the traditional English carol ***The Holly and the Ivy*** is the work of **John Rutter** (b. 1945). Rutter is one of most well-known choral composers and arrangers of his generation. Rutter served as Director of Music at Clare College from 1975 to 1979 and founded the Cambridge Singers in 1981. While Rutter claims an extensive musical repertoire, he is best known for his choral compositions. Rutter frequently travels to the United States, where he regularly appears as guest conductor and often debuts his own work.

***The First Nowell*; arr. Mack Wilberg**

Mack Wilberg (b. 1955) provides this beautiful arrangement of the traditional English carol ***The First Nowell***. Wilberg is perhaps best known throughout the choral world for his arrangements of

traditional Christmas carols. In this arrangement, Wilberg combines the singing of the traditional tune with a counter harmony in the accompaniment to create a unique setting for this beloved Christmas carol.

***Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*; arr. Mack Wilberg**

As with his arrangement of *The First Nowell*, **Mack Wilberg** arranged Felix Mendelssohn's ***Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*** for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Wilberg was appointed music director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in March 2008. In addition to arranging and conducting, Wilberg has also produced several original compositions. Join the Des Moines Choral Society as we present the Iowa premiere performance of his masterwork *Requiem* during our spring concert.

***Praeludium Noel*; Randol Alan Bass**

Accomplished composer/arranger **Randol Alan Bass** (b. 1953) created ***Praeludium Noel*** by commission for the Music Ministry of the Highland Park Presbyterian church of Dallas, Texas. Bass works actively to further the non-professional musician's understanding and appreciation for the musical arts through his civic work as well as his work composing and arranging music. In *Praeludium Noel*, he takes familiar carols and gives them an energetic, powerful style that is sure to excite performers and listeners alike.