

Great Sacred Music

Sunday, December 6, 2020

Anonymous 18th century melody, arr. Philip Ledger: Lo! he comes with clouds descending
Choir of King's College, Cambridge, Sir Philip Ledger
Adrian Partington, organ

Jacob Handl: Aspiciens a longe
Men and Boys of Grace Cathedral Choir, San Francisco, John Fenstermaker
Christopher Putnam, organ

English traditional: Blessed be that maid Mary
Cambridge Singers, John Rutter

Philip Ledger was Organist and Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge from 1974 to 1982. Jacobus Gallus, also known as Jakob Handl (1550-1591), was born in Slovenia. He was heavily influenced by the Venetian style of the Gabriellis, Claudio Merulo and others. "Blessed be that maid Mary" uses a 16th-century text paired with a 15th-century tune. Sir David Willcocks' arrangement appeared in Carols for Choirs in 1961.

Gregorian chant: Rorate Caeli Desuper
Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo De Silos, Francisco Lara

Traditional: Up, awake and away!
Choir of King's College, Cambridge, Philip Ledger
Adrian Partington, organ

Traditional: On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry
Choir of Wells Cathedral, Malcolm Archer
Rupert Gough, organ

The Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo De Silos gained fame with an album entitled Chant which went double platinum and made it to third place on Billboard. "Up, awake and away!" is a Galician carol. The text for "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry" was written by Charles Coffin (1676-1749).

Commentary: Father Jack Morrison

Phoebe Knapp, arr. Nancy Wertsch: Blessed Assurance
Choir of Riverside Church, New York, Dr. John Walker
Makea McDonald, soprano; J. David Williams, organ; Nidra Neal, piano

Traditional, harmonized by Michael: Praetorius, arr. by Richard Webster
Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
Choir and Congregation of Christ Church, Georgetown, Richard Webster
Thomas Smith, organ; Brandon Almagro, trumpet; Kevin Businsky, trumpet

Orlando Gibbons: See, see, the word is incarnate

University of California Berkeley Chamber Chorus; Berkeley Festival Consort of Viols, John Butt
Jeffrey Thomas, tenor

Fanny Crosby wrote the text for "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!". The hymn appears in almost 1,000 hymnals. "Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming" is a paraphrase of Isaiah 11:1. English composer Orlando Bibbons (1583-1625) was a graduate of King's College, Cambridge.

Gerald Finzi: Magnificat
Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, Stephen Layton
Commissioned by Smith College for their Christmas Vespers in 1952.

Johannes Brahms: Es ist ein' ros' entsprungen
David Hill, organ
Willis organ in Westminster Cathedral

Gerald Finzi composed his setting of the Magnificat for the annual Christmas Vespers at Smith College in 1952. Brahms chorale prelude on "Es ist ein' ros' entsprungen" is another setting of the Isaiah 11.1 text.

J.S. Bach: Cantata 70, "Wachet! betet! betet! wachet!"
Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and Choir, Ton Koopman
Sibylla Rubens, soprano; Bernhard Landauer, alto
Christoph Pregardien, tenor; Klaus Mertens, bass

The German translates as "Watch, pray, be prepared!" and was first performed on November 21, 1723 in Leipzig. The theme is Christ's second coming and the day of judgement.

Benjamin Britten: A Boy was Born, Op. 3
Holst Singers, Stephen Layton

Britten was 19 year old student at the Royal College of Music when he wrote "A Boy is Born". The work is a set of choral variations on old carols.

Peter I. Tchaikovsky: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Op.41
Corydon Singers, Matthew Best

Tchaikovsky composed his "Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom" in 1878.

Thomas Tallis: Missa Puer natus est nobis
Handel and Haydn Society Chorus, Grant Llewellyn

Missa Puer natus est nobis dates from 1554 when the Roman rite was re-established under Queen Mary.

John Rutter: Gloria
Cambridge Singers; Philip Jones Brass Ensemble, John Rutter

Mel Olsen, Director of Music at First United Methodist Church in Omaha, Nebraska, commissioned a setting of the Gloria from John Rutter. It had its first performance in May 1974.

Josef Haydn: St. Nicholas Mass

Choir of Christ Church Cathedral Oxford; Academy of Ancient Music

Simon Preston

Judith Nelson, soprano; Shirley Minty, contralto

Rogers Covey Crump, tenor; David Thomas, bass

Haydn's St. Nicholas Mass dates from 1772.