

Great Sacred Music Sunday, December 26, 2021

William J. Kirkpatrick: Away in a manger
Worcester Cathedral Choir, Donald Hunt

John Rutter: Dormi Jesu
Choir of King's College, Cambridge, Sir Stephen Cleobury

Traditional French carol: Angels we have heard on high
Mormon Tabernacle Choir; Columbia Symphony Orchestra, Jerold Ottley
Marilyn Horne, mezzo-soprano

The text for "Away in a manger" is attributed to Martin Luther. John Rutter composed "Dormi Jesu" for Stephen Cleobury and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge. The tune for "angels we have heard on high" is an 18th-century noel from the Languedoc region of France. The text is based on St. Luke's Gospel, Chapter 2, verses 8-15.

Traditional: There is no rose of such virtue
Voces8

Tomás Luis de Victoria: O magnum mysterium
Chanticleer

Traditional, arr. Richard Purvis: Greensleeves
J. David Williams, organ
Aeolian-Skinner organ in Riverside Church, New York City

"There is no rose of such virtue" traces its origins to a 15th-century manuscript in the Wren Library at Trinity College, Cambridge. "O magnum mysterium" (O great mystery) is a text from Christmas Vespers. Richard Purvis (1913-1994) was Organist and Choirmaster of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco from 1947-1971. He died on Christmas Day in 1994.

Margaret Rizza: Mysterium amoris
Gaudete Ensemble, Eamonn Dougan

John Rutter: What sweeter music
Cambridge Singers; City of London Sinfonia, John Rutter

Harold Darke: In the bleak midwinter
Elora Festival Singers, Noel Edison
Michael Bloss, organ

Rizza (English, b. 1929) sang professionally for 25 years and taught at London's Guildhall School of Music, but did not begin composing until 1997. This is Harold Darke's setting of the 1872 poem by Christina Rossetti.

Michael Praetorius: In dulci jubilo

New York Cornet and Sacbut Ensemble, Ben Peck
Julianne Baird, soprano; Mark Bleeke, tenor; Peter Becker, countertenor and baritone
Wilbur Pauley, bass

J.S. Bach: In dulci jubilo, BWV 629
Richard Marlow, organ
1976 Metzler organ in Trinity College, Cambridge

From ChoralWiki: "Praetorius published twenty volumes of music, most of it intended for use in Lutheran church services. This stirring setting of Puer natus in Bethlehem, one of several settings that he published of this chorale, comes from Praetorius' 1619 collection, *Polyhymnia Caduceatrix et Panegyrica* ("Polyhymnia – the Muse of sacred poetry – Herald and Praise-giver"), which contains some of his largest-scale works, for up to 21 voices or instruments, arranged in up to 6 choirs. The piece is in 12 parts: 3 solo voices, a 4-part choir, 4-part strings and basso continuo, and shows off Praetorius' fascination with both rhythmic and ensemble variation, revealing a delight in playing with tonal colour and texture. The verses, in Latin, are interspersed with a ritornello, in German. The composer suggests that the congregation should sing verses of the chorale to a simple setting, at the end of each half." Richard Marlow (1939-2013) was Organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, from 1968-2006.

J.S. Bach: Christmas Oratorio, BWV 248 Part Two
Dresden State Orchestra; Leipzig Radio Chorus, Peter Schreier
Helen Donath, soprano; Andrea Ihle, soprano; Marjana Lipovsek, mezzo-soprano
Peter Schreier, tenor; Eberhard Buchner, tenor; Robert Holl, bass

Bach's Christmas Oratorio is actually six cantatas. The second one was intended to be sung the second day of Christmas (Dec. 26), tells of the annunciation to the shepherds.

Esteban Salas: Mass in G minor
Exaudi Choir of Cuba, María Felicia Pérez
Christian Mouyen, organ

Lionel Salter, writing in Gramophone, states: "The story of Estevan Salas, a victim of uncaring bureaucracy, is a pathetic one. This Creole musician, of such humility that he hesitated for 65 years before accepting himself to be worthy of priesthood, had been put in charge of music in the little cathedral of Santiago de Cuba in 1764: he attempted, with his own money, to expand its meagre resources – six singers, bassoon and organ – on the expectation of a grant from the municipal council, which was controlled from distant Spain. When the weak Carlos IV disallowed the expenditure, all Salas's belongings were sequestered, and he died in abject poverty. He had composed some 150 works, often revealing in the independence of his instrumental writing – as in the two Masses and the solo cantata *Tu, mi Dios*, with its quasi-operatic *da capo* aria – the influence of the Neapolitan school of Durante, Porpora et al (Naples then belonging to the Spanish crown), knowledge of which may have reached him through a musical visitor from Spain in 1750."

W.A. Mozart: Church Sonata in B flat, K. 68
Amsterdam Mozart Players, Peter Hurford, organ
1976 K. B. Blank organ in Bethlehemkerk, Papendrecht, Holland

Mozart's church sonatas are short works for organ and strings written to be played between the reading of the Epistle and Gospel during the Mass.

Hector Berlioz: L'Enfance du Christ, Op. 25 Part 1 "Herod's Dream"

La Chapelle Royale; Collegium Vocale; Orchestra of the Champs Elysees, Philippe Herreweghe
Veronique Gens, soprano, as the Virgin Mary; Paul Agnew, tenor, narrator;
Olivier Lallouette, baritone, Joseph; Laurent Naouri, bass-baritone, Herod
Frederic Caton, bass-baritone, the family father

From ClassicFM: "One evening in 1850 Berlioz found himself at a party where everyone was playing cards. As this was something he particularly disliked, his friend Pierre Duc asked him to inscribe his album:

I take a piece of paper and scribble a few staves on which a four-part andantino for organ appears. It seems to have a rustic character and to suggest a naïve mystical feeling. So I at once think of writing appropriate words for it. The organ piece disappears and becomes a chorus of shepherds in Bethlehem bidding farewell to the child Jesus as the Holy Family leaves for Egypt.

Such was the origin of the sacred trilogy L'enfance du Christ; from the germ of a few bars of organ music sprang the full completed work in three parts."

Giuseppe Sammartini: Concerto Grosso in G minor, Op. 5 No. 6 "Christmas Concerto"
Les Violons du Roy, Bernard Labadie

From their website: "Les Violons du Roy has been a focal point of Québec City's musical life since it was founded in 1984, and in 1997 it reached out to enrich the cultural landscape of Montréal as well. In 2007, the orchestra moved into its permanent home base in Québec City's Palais Montcalm while continuing to build on the worldwide reputation it has acquired in countless concerts and recordings carried by medici.tv, Radio-Canada, CBC, and NPR along with regular appearances on the festival circuit."

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Mass in G minor

Corydon Singers, Matthew Best

Mary Seers, soprano; Michael Chance, counter-tenor; Philip Salmon, tenor; Jonathan Best, bass

English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams composed his Mass in G minor in 1922.

William Byrd: Mass for Three Voices

Parthenia XVI, Mary Jane Newman

English Tudor composer William Byrd wrote three settings of the mass, one each for three voices, four voices, and five voices. Because celebrating a Roman Catholic mass in post-reformation England was illegal, Byrd published his three settings of the mass anonymously with no indication as to who the composer and publisher were.