

Great Sacred Music

Sunday, June 5, 2022

Ralph Vaughan Williams: Come down, O Love Divine
Worcester Cathedral Choir, Christopher Robinson

Thomas Attwood: Come Holy Ghost
Clare College Chapel Choir, Timothy Brown
Dominic Wheeler, organ

John Rutter: Veni Sancte Spiritus
Choir of King's College, Cambridge, Sir Stephen Cleobury
Robert Quinney, organ

This Sunday in the church year is Pentecost. English composer Vaughan Williams named his hymn tune Down Ampney after the village in which he was born. The text is a translation of the 14th century Italian poet Bianco da Siena. Thomas Attwood (1765-1838) became organist of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, in 1796. Rutter's setting of the Whitsuntide hymn "Come, Holy Ghost" shows another side to this gifted composer's writing style.

Peter Hurford: Litany to the Holy Spirit
Choir of Saint Paul's Parish, K Street, Robert McCormick

Sir Edward Elgar: Prologue: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
from The Apostles, Op. 49
London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra, Richard Hickox

Peter Hurford's Litany to the Holy Spirit takes its text from a poem of the same name by Robert Herrick. According to English composer Sir Edward Elgar, he first began thinking about The Apostles whilst he was in grade school. It was not until much later in this life that he began the process of composing this grand oratorio.

Commentary: William Weisser

Henry Walford Davies: Solemn Melody
William J. Weisser, organ
1962 Aeolian-Skinner Organ, Op. 1399 in St. Philip's Cathedral, Atlanta, Georgia

Carson Cooman: I Will Pour Out My Spirit
Royal Holloway Choir, University of London, Rupert Gough
Samuel Rathbone, organ

Sir Henry Walford Davies was Master of the King's Music from 1934-1941. American composer Carson Cooman (1982-) is a prolific composer who writes in a variety of forms.

Franz Schubert: Hymn to the Holy Spirit, D. 964
Capella Bavariae; Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra
Wolfgang Sawallisch

Harold Friedell: Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether
Choir of St. John's Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C., Samuel Carabetta
J. Dan Kiser, organ

Libby Larsen: Veni, Creator Spiritus
Douglas Cleveland, organ
Goulding & Wood organ, Saint Meinrad Archabbey

Schubert's "Hymn to the Holy Spirit" was written for eight male voices, soli, and chorus with winds. Harold Friedell (1905-1958) was a native of Jamaica, New York. He was organist of Calvary Episcopal Church and then at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in New York City. Dr. Libby Larsen (1950-) studied with Dominick Argento.

J.S. Bach: Cantata 172, "Erschallet, ihr Lieder"
Holland Boys' Choir; Netherlands Bach Collegium, Pieter Jan Leusink
Ruth Holton, soprano; Sytse Buwalde, alto
Nico van der Meel, tenor; Bas Ramselaar, bass

The German translates as "Resound, ye songs, ring out, ye strings!" The cantata dates from 1714 when Bach was at Weimar. Simon Crouch notes: "Let the trumpets and drums ring out to praise the Lord! If you are a trumpet player this is one of those cantatas to get your lips around. There's a resounding opening chorus followed by a recitative which itself is followed by an aria that greets the Holy Trinity with fanfares. The brass section then seems to have been sent off to the pub, since things quieten down a lot."

Alexander Grechaninov: Missa Sancti Spiritus for Chorus and Organ, Op. 169
Russian State Symphonic Cappella, Valery Polyansky
Tatiana Jeranje, contralto

From the liner notes: "If the name of Grechaninov remains unfamiliar to music-lovers thirty-nine years after his death in New York at the ripe old age of ninety-two, that is through no lack of quality in his prolific output. His church music continues to be heard in present-day Russia and it is probably in this field that he is best remembered."

Thomas Arne: Organ Concerto No. 1 in C
Cantilena, Adrian Shepherd
Roger Bevan Williams, organ

English composer Thomas Arne is perhaps best known for his patriotic song "Rule Britannia!"

Gioachino Rossini: Messa di Gloria
Academy and Chorus of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Sir Neville Marriner
Sumi Jo, soprano; Ann Murray, contralto
Francisco Araiza, tenor; Raul Gimenez, tenor; Samuel Ramey, bass

Writing in Gramophone, Richard Osborne writes: "It is a mystery why Rossini's Messa di gloria is so little known. He wrote the work—a ninemovement setting of the "Kyrie" and "Gloria" for five soloists, chorus and orchestra—in Naples in 1821. As a composer he was in the full leaf and flower of his art.

The Naples experience had hugely expanded his command of both orchestral and choral writing. And great voices remained on tap, so much so that he could afford to write within the Mass for a pair of tenors, the one tender and florid in the "Gratias", the other altogether more emotionally racked in the 'Qui tollis'."

J.S. Bach: Missa Brevis in A, BWV 234

Pygmalion, Raphael Pichon

Eugenie Warnier, soprano; Magid El-Bushra, alto

Emiliano Gonzalez-Toro, tenor; Sydney Fierro, baritone

Ensemble Pygmalion has been active in France since 2006. Its brilliant young conductor Rafael Pichon has established a solid reputation as one of the premier early music conductors in the world today.

George Frideric Handel: Utrecht Te Deum

Choir of St. Paul's Cathedral; Parley of Instruments, John Scott

Handel wrote his Utrecht Te Deum on a commission from the British royal Family to celebrate the Peace of Utrecht in 1713.