

Great Sacred Music

Sunday, September 4, 2022

William Billings: Hear my Pray'r
His Majestie's Clerkes, Paul Hillier

William Billings (1746 - 1800) is regarded as America's first choral composer

Traditional American spiritual, arr. by Timothy Brown: Steal away
Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, Timothy Brown
Elin Manahan Thomas, soprano; John Harte, tenor

Randall Thompson: Alleluia
Turtle Creek Chorale, Timothy Seelig

William Billings (1746-1800) is considered by most scholars to be the first American choral composer. Timothy Brown succeeded John Rutter as Director of Clare College Choir, Cambridge. The Turtle Creek Chorale was founded in 1980 and currently has over 250 members.

William Batchelder Bradbury: Sweet Hour of Prayer
Anonymous 4
Text by W.W. Walford

Ned Rorem: O God, my heart is ready
Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, John Scott
Frederick Teardo, organ

Traditional, arr. Barbara Harbach: Kingsfold: "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say"
Barbara Harbach, organ
1965 Aeolian-Skinner organ at Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis, Missouri

William Batchelder Bradbury (1816-1868) studied music with Dr. Lowell Mason. Ned Rorem wrote "O God, my heart is ready" in 1992 for St. Thomas Choir to celebrate the 20th anniversary of The Rev. John Andrew as Rector. American composer Barbara Harbach was Professor of Music at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Cpmmentary: Bob Chamberlin

F. Melius Christiansen: Beautiful Savior
Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church Choir, Jeffrey Brillhart

Robert Ashford: The Lord is my Shepherd (23rd Psalm)
Choir of the New York State University at Fredonia, Gerald Gray

Zavel Zilberts: Psalm 137
Neimah Singers; Schola Hebraeica, Neil Levin
Alberto Mizrahi, tenor; Christopher Bowers-Broadbent, organ

"Beautiful Savior is the St. Olaf Choir's signature piece. It forms a timeless link between four conductors and many generations of choir members, alumni, and audience members. The tune is originally a Silesian folk tune, arranged by F. Melius Christiansen and later revised by his son, Olaf C. Christiansen. The original German text is taken from the Münster Gesangbuch and sung in a translation by Joseph A. Seiss." Robert Ashford is Professor of Law at the Syracuse University College of Law, in Syracuse, New York. Zavel Zilberts' setting of Psalm 137, "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept" dates from 1905.

T. Tertius Noble: Come, Labor On
Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, Gerre Hancock
Michael Kleinschmidt, organ

Gerre Hancock: Variations on Ora Labora
Saint Thomas Brass, Benjamin Sheen, organ

T. Tertius Noble (1867-1953) was Organist of York Minster in England before he was appointed Organist of St. Thomas Church, New York in 1913. "Dr. Gerre Hancock (1934-2012) was a member of the National Council of the American Guild of Organists, and was a founder and past president of the Association of Anglican Musicians. He was assistant organist at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in New York, organist-choirmaster at Cincinnati's Christ Church Cathedral, and, most notably organist-choir director at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in New York, where the services of Choral Evensong were something to be cherished."

J.S. Bach: Cantata 35, "Geist und Seele wird verwirret"
Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki
Robin Blaze, alto

This cantata was first performed on September 8, 1726. The opening movement is a virtuoso tour de force for the organist playing the portatif organ in the ensemble. The German translates as "Spirit and soul become confused."

Elinor Remick Warren: Abram in Egypt
Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of Cracow, Bruce Ferden
Thomas Hampson, baritone

Los Angeles composer Elinor Remick Warren (1900-1991) studied with Nadia Boulanger. The oratorio uses texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls and book of Genesis.

Samuel Adler: Festive Proclamation
William Neil, organ
1968 Aeolian-Skinner organ Organ in the National Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC

Samuel Adler (1928) has composed over 400 works, including 5 operas, 5 oratorios, and 6 symphonies.

Dan Locklair: Requiem
Royal Holloway Choir, Southern Sinfonia, Rupert Gough
Martin Baker, organ

Professor Locklair's Requiem had its premiere performance on November 1, 2015, at St. Paul's

Episcopal Church in Winston-Salem. It was written in memory of Professor Locklair's parents.

Henry Purcell: My heart is inditing
Chanticleer; Capriccio Stravagante, Joseph Jennings

Henry Purcell (1659-95) wrote his anthem "My heart is inditing" for the coronation of King James II in 1685.

Robert Kyr: The Cloud of Unknowing
Conspirare; Victoria Bach Festival Orchestra, Craig Hella Johnson
Esteli Gomez, soprano; David Farwig, baritone
Kyr is an American composer, born 1952

David Patrick Stearns writes in Gramophone: "Robert Kyr (1952-) represents a curious phenomenon: a composer just now achieving mainstream recognition after a long, productive creative life guided less by current fashions and more by a far-reaching spiritual exploration that allows him to ignore outside expectations and compose with a broad palette of texts by saints and mystics, and to express their words not with a need to project his own compositional voice but with an instinctively appropriate mixture of high-concept choral harmonies and near-vernacular song, seasoned with well-selected exotic world-music influences."

Antonio Vivaldi: Dixit Dominus, RV 595
The King's Consort and Choir, Robert King
Susan Gritton, soprano; Catrin Wyn-Davies,
soprano; Catherine Denley, mezzo-soprano
Charles Daniels, tenor; Neal Davies, bass; Michael George, baritone

Scholars have not determined for what occasion this rather grand work was written. But they think that it was composed for a festival sometime after 1720. While Vivaldi's Gloria is much better known, Dixit Dominus is every bit as splendid in its scoring and style.