

Great Sacred Music

Sunday, November 6, 2022

Edwin George Monk: Angel-voices ever singing
Choir of Wells Cathedral, Malcolm Archer
Rupert Gough, organ

Peter I. Tchaikovsky: Cherubic Hymn No. 1
St. Petersburg Chamber Choir, Nikolai Korniev
from Tchaikovsky's "Nine Sacred Choral Works"

Sir William Walton: A litany
Cambridge Singers, John Rutter

Francis Pott's text "Angel voices ever singin" was originally written "For the Dedication of an Organ, or for a Meeting of Choirs." Tchaikovsky's Cherubic Hymn No. 1 is one of the movements in the composer's Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. Scott Dorsey writes in ChoralNet: "A Litany, for SATB a cappella chorus, is Walton's earliest extant choral piece."

Charles Wood: Hail, gladdening light
Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, Graham Ross

George Frideric Handel: Let the Bright Seraphim from Samson
Columbia Chamber Ensemble, Gerard Schwarz
Judith Blegen, soprano; Gerard Schwarz, trumpet

Johannes Brahms: Ave Maria, Op. 12
Warsaw Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra, Antoni Wit

"Hail, gladdening Light" or the Phos Hilaron, is one of the earliest known hymns of the Christian church. John Henken, writing in program notes for the LA Phil notes: "'Let the Bright Seraphim" comes at the very end of Samson, just before the final chorus. Sung by an anonymous "Israelitish Woman," the aria summons the celestial hosts of seraphim and cherubim to hail the dead hero, with trumpet figures responding to the singer." Writing in the liner notes, Julian Haylock comments: "Composed in 1858, but not published until 1861, the first performance of the Ave Maria Op 12 was given at the Gradener Akademie in Hamburg on 2 December 1859, with orchestral accompaniment, along with the Funeral Hymn Op 13, both directed by Brahms. It represents the composer's first published attempt at combining vocal and instrumental music, and although there are certain infelicities, the obvious warmth of expression contrasts markedly with the main body of the motets as a whole."

from the Codex Las Huelgas, c. 1300: Conductus: Mater patris et filia
Anonymous 4

Francis Jackson: Remember for good, O Father
Choir of York Minster, Philip Moore
John Scott Whitely, organ

W.A. Mozart: Ave verum corpus, K. 618
Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge, Christopher Robinson

Dietrich Buxtehude: Chorale Prelude on Vater unser himmelreich
Joseph Payne, organ
1991 Noack organ in Sacred Heart Cathedral, Davenport, Iowa

According to Music for the Eyes, "Discovered by two monks in 1904, the Códice de canto polifónico, or Codex Las Huelgas, is a liturgical codex copied sometime between 1300 and 1325. It was preserved in the Las Huelgas convent founded by Alfonso VIII in Burgos, Spain." Francis Jackson (1917-2022) was Organist of York Minster for 36 years. Mozart was writing his opera Die Zuberflote in 1791 when he composed this much-loved anthem. Danish/German organist Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707) influenced a twenty year old Bach who spent three months with Buxtehude in 1705.

J.S. Bach: Cantata 98, "Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan"
Holland Boys' Choir; Netherlands Bach Collegium, Pieter Jan Leusink
Ruth Holton, soprano; Sytse Buwalde, alto
Knut Schoch, tenor; Bas Ramselaar, bass

The German translates as "What God does, that is done well." The cantata was first performed in Leipzig on November 10, 1726. It is one of three cantatas which Bach wrote using this title.

Commentary: David Jernigan

J.S. Bach: Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565
David Jernigan, organ
1977 Holtkamp organ Op. 1936 in Christ Episcopal Church, Raleigh, North Carolina

David Jernigan (BM and CAPS) graduated from ECU and is the director of music at Christ Church on Capitol Square in Raleigh. He runs a large music program and recently founded the Raleigh Bach Soloists, a professional ensemble.

Josquin Despres: Missa Ave maris stella
Weser-Renaissance Ensemble Bremen, Manfred Cordes

"The Missa Ave maris stella was copied into a Vatican choirbook for the use of the papal singers no later than 1507."

W.A. Mozart: Great Mass in C minor, K. 427
Les Arts Florissants, William Christie
Patricia Petibon, soprano I; Lynne Dawson, soprano II
Joseph Cornwell, tenor; Alan Ewing, bass

This mass was the last mass setting which Mozart composed. It dates from 1782-83 and is largely incomplete. Modern performances have used reconstructions of the missing movements and/or editions which complete what music has come down to us.

Gerre Hancock: Toccata for Organ
Todd Wilson, organ

Arents Memorial Organ in St. Thomas' Church, New York

Todd Wilson (1951-) is head of the Organ Department at the Cleveland Institute of Music, Director of Music at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Cleveland, Ohio, and Curator of the E.M. Skinner organ at Cleveland's Severance Music Center.

Josef Haydn: Lord Nelson Mass (Missa in angustiis)
London Symphony Chorus; City of London Sinfonia, Richard Hickox
Barbara Bonney, soprano; Anne Howells, mezzo-soprano
Anthony Rolfe Johnson, tenor; Stephen Roberts, baritone

The original title of Haydn's Lord Nelson Mass was Missa in Angustiis or Mass for troubled times. It was a scary time for Haydn and all Austrians as Napoleon's armies were threatening to invade.