

Great Sacred Music

Sunday, August 6, 2023

Program Notes

1. **Orlande de Lassus: Musica Dei Donum** - Ex Cathedra, Jeffrey Skidmore The Flemish composer Orlande de Lassus (1532-1594) was known for his innovative, expressive choral works. *Musica Dei Donum* (Gift of God's Music) is a masterful, serene motet that testifies to the divine power of music.
2. **Sir Charles Villiers Stanford: Beati quorum via** - Utah State University Chamber Singers, Cory Evans This piece is one of Stanford's (1852-1924) most famous choral works, displaying his unique ability to marry text and music. Its Latin title translates to "Blessed are they whose way is blameless," setting the tone for this ethereal composition.
3. **John Rutter: For the beauty of the earth** - Cambridge Singers; City of London Sinfonia, John Rutter One of the most prolific and beloved of contemporary choral composers, John Rutter (b. 1945) composed this popular anthem as an ode to the Earth's beauty. It's a delightful testament to Rutter's distinctive, richly harmonic style.
4. **Felix Mendelssohn: Sonata in D minor, Op. 65 No. 6** - Peter Hurford, organ Rieger Organ in Ratzeburg Cathedral, Germany Mendelssohn (1809-1847) composed six organ sonatas in 1845. The sixth, in D minor, is a dramatic and lively work that explores the full range of the organ's expressive capabilities, with a captivating fugue concluding the piece.
5. **Franz Biebl: Ave Maria** - Chanticleer Biebl's *Ave Maria*, composed in 1964, has become a favorite of choral groups worldwide. The ensemble Chanticleer brings their exquisite blend and precision to this beautiful work, creating a prayerful musical experience.
6. **Robert Prizeman: Ave Maria** - Libera, Robert Prizeman Prizeman's *Ave Maria* is known for its beautiful melody and lush harmonies. Performed by Libera, an all-boy English vocal group, this rendition showcases their angelic voices and emotional depth.
7. **Jacob Arcadelt: Ave Maria** - Cappella Caeciliana, Donal McCrisken This early and simple setting of *Ave Maria* by Arcadelt (1507-1568) is a testament to the composer's mastery of vocal line and harmony, creating a sense of serene devotion throughout.
8. **Dietrich Buxtehude: Prelude and Fugue in G minor, BuxWV 148** - Wolfgang Rubsam, organ The Metzler organ in the Catholic Church of Zurzach Known for his grand and intense organ works, Buxtehude's (1637-1707) *Prelude and Fugue in G minor* showcases his gift for creating dramatic and complex music, replete with demanding passages and intricate counterpoint.
9. **J. S. Bach: Cantata 194, "Hochsterwünschtes Freudenfest"** - Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and Choir, Ton Koopman Bach's *Cantata 194* is a joyful and jubilant work. The ensemble skillfully brings out the exuberant, festive atmosphere in this celebration of faith, life, and love.
10. **Gabriel Faure: Cantique de Jean Racine, Op. 11** - Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge, George Guest Sir Stephen Cleobury, organ Faure (1845-1924) composed this sublime choral work at the age of just 19. Its gentle, flowing melody and warm harmonies express a heartfelt plea for divine guidance.

11. **Peter I. Tchaikovsky: Cherubic Hymn No. 1** - St. Petersburg Chamber Choir, Nikolai Korniev This piece from the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom showcases Tchaikovsky's (1840-1893) ability to craft sacred music of emotional depth and complexity, evoking a sense of divine mystery.
12. **Johann David Heinichen: Mass No. 12 in D** - Dresden Chamber Choir and Baroque Orchestra, Hans-Christoph Rademann Heinichen (1683-1729) was a significant contributor to the sacred music tradition. This Mass showcases his aptitude for dramatic choral writing and skillful orchestration.
13. **Zoltan Kodaly: Laudes organi** - Choir of Westminster Cathedral, James O'Donnell Andrew Reid, organ Kodaly (1882-1967), a significant figure in 20th century music, composed Laudes organi as a vibrant ode to the organ. This work is a masterful blend of traditional Hungarian elements and innovative musical techniques.
14. **Antonio Vivaldi: Laudate Pueri, RV 600** - King's Consort, Robert King Susan Gritton, soprano Vivaldi's (1678-1741) Laudate Pueri is a festive psalm setting for soprano solo and orchestra. The piece exhibits Vivaldi's distinct flair for dramatic text setting and exuberant orchestral writing.
15. **Morten Lauridsen: Lux aeterna** - Polyphony with the Britten Sinfonia, Stephen Layton Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943) is renowned for his contribution to contemporary choral music. Lux aeterna is a radiant five-movement work inspired by various references to light from sacred Latin texts.

Each composition in this program invites us on a musical journey through time and space, with each piece standing as a testimony to the timeless power and beauty of sacred music.