

Great Sacred Music

Sunday, September 12, 2021

William Henry Monk: Abide with me
Choir of St. John's, Elora, Noel Edison
Paul Halley, organ
Descant by The Rev. Stephen Crisp

Don Carlo Gesualdo: O vos omnes
Pomerium, Alexander Blachly

H. Walford Davies: Psalm 130, "Out of the deep"
Choir of King's College, Cambridge, Philip Ledger
Francis Grier, organ

Grammy Award-winner Paul Halley (1952-) is currently active in the Halifax, Nova Scotia area. The descant to "Abide with me" was written by The Reverend Stephen Crisp. Spanish Renaissance composer Gesualdo's motet is a setting of words from the Office of Tenebrae for Maundy Thursday. Walford Davies was Organist at London's Temple Church where his assistant was none other than Leopold Stokowski.

Antonio Lotti: Crucifixus a 10
Taverner Choir, Andrew Parrott

Sir John Stainer: God so loved the world from The Crucifixion
Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge, George Guest

Traditional Shaker hymn, arr. by Wilbur Held: Simple Gifts
John Balka, organ
1971 Ruffatti organ in St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco, California

Italian Baroque composer Antonio Lotti (1667-1740) spent much of his professional life as a musician at Saint Mark's Basilica, Venice. English composer Sir John Stainer (1840-1901) was Organist of Magdalen College and Saint Paul's Cathedral. American organist John Balka (1948-1999) was a founding member of the Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians.

Commentary: Bob Innskeep

Philip Bliss: When peace like a river
National Lutheran Choir, Dr. David Cherwien

George Frideric Handel: I know that my Redeemer liveth from Messiah
English Chamber Orchestra, Sir Charles Mackerras
Elisabeth Harwood, soprano

Samuel Barber: Agnus Dei
Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys, John Scott
Joshua Ross, treble

Horatio Spafford wrote the text of the hymn "When peace like a river." Handel's setting of the text from Job 19:25 in Messiah has to be one of the more reassuring moments in that great work. In 1967 American composer Samuel Barber set his 1936 Adagio for Strings to the text Agnus Dei. The work is scored for SATB choir with optional accompaniment.

Gabriel Faure: In paradisum from Requiem, Op. 48
Winchester Cathedral Choir; Bournemouth Sinfonietta, David Hill

Nicolas de Grigny: Fugue a 5
Joseph Payne, organ
Fisk organ, Opus 78, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont

The Bournemouth Sinfonietta was a chamber orchestra founded in 1968 as an offshoot of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. The Sinfonietta disbanded in 1999. French organist and composer Nicolas de Grigny (1672-1703) was organist of St. Denis in Paris as well as Notre Dame in Reims where he was born. The Fugue for Five Voices was published in de Grigny's Livre d'Orgue.

J.S. Bach: Cantata 51, "Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen"
Bach Choir of Bethlehem; Bach Festival Orchestra, Greg Funfgeld
Ann Monoyios, soprano

This cantata for solo soprano is one of the great virtuoso cantatas which Bach wrote. It was first performed on September 17, 1730 in Leipzig. The German translates as "Praise ye God in every nation"

Gregorio Allegri: Miserere mei, Deus
Choir of New College, Oxford, Edward Higginbottom

Originally only heard in the Sistine Chapel during Holy Week, Allegri's setting of Psalm 51 was introduced to the world by a young Mozart who heard it and copied it from memory.

Herbert Howells: Requiem
Vasari, Jeremy Backhouse

In BBC Review Charlotte Gardner writes: "Herbert Howells' Requiem must be one of the most beautiful and searingly moving works in the entire English sacred musical canon. Written in the early 30s but not released until 1980, it is inextricably linked to untimely youthful death; Howells modelled it on Walford Davies' A Short Requiem of 1915, written in memory of those killed in the war. Later, he drew heavily from it for Hymnus Paradisi, his memorial to the nine-year-old son he lost to polio in 1935.

However, despite all this, the Requiem manages to express not just deep grief but also eternal hope, largely thanks to its unusual structure. It juxtaposes traditional "Salvator mundi" and "Requiem aeternam" movements with settings of three of the Bible's most encouraging passages: Psalms 23 and 121, and John's vision in the book of Revelation of the new heavens and the new earth."

Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Messe de Monsieur de Mauroy
Le Concert Spirituel, Herve Niquet

Korre D. Foster writes: "Marc-Antoine Charpentier's setting of the Messe pour Monsieur Mauroy is the only composition in his oeuvre which was dedicated to a particular person. Each of Charpentier's twelve mass settings is unique; this mass setting is his longest at over 1,500 measures. Charpentier masses are diverse: one composition for women's voices, a mass for instruments only, a Christmas mass, as well as settings of the Requiem text."

William Byrd: Mass for Four Voices
New York Polyphony

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.

Joseph-Guy Ropartz: Messe Breve
Choeur Regional Vittoria d'Ile de France, Michel Piquemal
Francois-Henri Houbart, organ

French composer Joseph-Guy Ropartz (1864– 1955) studied with Jules Massenet.