

Great Sacred Music

Sunday, July 25, 2021

William Croft: O worship the king
Choir of Westminster Abbey, Martin Neary
Martin Baker, organ
Tune: Hanover. Descant by Alan Gray

Joseph Barnby: Psalm 24
Choir of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, John Scott
Andrew Lucas, organ

Louis Lewandowski: Ma Tovu
Siegen Philharmonic Choir, Herbert Ermert
Estrongo Nachama, cantor; Harry Foss, organ

A great hymn, a great choir and a superb organist is a combination hard to beat. William Croft (1678-1727) was elected Organist of Westminster Abbey in 1709. For centuries the psalms have been sung to plainchant tones. Anglican musicians in the English Reformation era developed a harmonized version of chanting the psalter. This is now known as Anglican Chant. "ma Tovu" is a prayer chanted upon entering the synagogue. It begins with Numbers 24:5.

Sergei Rachmaninoff: Cherubic Hymn from Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Op. 31
Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, Graham Ross

Giovanni Gabrieli: Jubilemus singuli
Gregg Smith Singers, Vittorio Negri

Jules Van Nuffel: Ad te levavi oculos meus
Choir of St. Rombaux Cathedral, Malines, Belgium, Johan van Bouwelen
Peter Pieters, organ

The Cherubic Hymn is the 8th movement of Rachmaninoff's Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, Op. 31. "Jubilemus singuli" translates as ""Let us all rejoice"" Jules Van Nuffel (1883-1953) was a Belgian priest and composer.

Herbert Howells: Regina caeli
Choir of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, Frank W. Boles

Ronald Arnatt: Lord, Thou Hast Been Our Dwelling Place
Westminster Choir, Joseph Flummerfelt

John Rutter: The Lord is my shepherd
Cambridge Singers; City of London Sinfonia, John Rutter
Quentin Poole, oboe

Traditional Kiev Melody: Kontakion of the departed
Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, Timothy Brown

English composer Herbert Howells' setting of the Marian responsary "Regina Caeli" was written for Westminster Cathedral in 1916 but not published until 1988. Dr. Ronald Arnatt (1930-2018) was organist and director of music at several American churches including Christ Church Cathedral in St. Louis, Missouri. The hallmarks of English composer John Rutter's music are its accessibility and beautiful melodies. The Kontakio is a prayer used in the Russian Orthodox liturgy on various occasions.

Commentary: Christopher Jacobson

William Bolcom: Jesus Loves Me from Gospel Preludes, Book 2
Christopher Jacobson, organ
1932 Aeolian Organ Opus 1785 at Duke University Chapel

American composer William Bolcom won a Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for his composition 12 New Etudes for Piano.

J.S. Bach: Cantata 178, "Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns halt"
Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki
Yukari Nonoshita, soprano; Matthew White, alto
Makoto Sakurada, tenor; Peter Kooy, bass-baritone

The German translates as "If God the Lord is not on our side." First performed on July 30, 1724 in Leipzig, this cantata consists of six movements. The first is a grand fantasia for choir and orchestra with the choir intoning the chorale written by Lutheran poet Justus Jonas.

J.S. Bach: St. John Passion
Choir of King's College, Cambridge; Academy of Ancient Music, Sir Stephen Cleobury
James Gilchrist, tenor, Evangelista; Neal Davies, bass, Christus

From King's College Recordings: "Stephen Cleobury and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge are joined by the Academy of Ancient Music in Bach's much-loved St John Passion. Captured live in 2016 during Easter celebrations at the College, it features an all-star line-up of soloists who are renowned for their handling of the repertoire, including King's alumnus James Gilchrist as the Evangelist and Neal Davies, Cardiff Singer of the World prize winner, as Jesus. The St John Passion presents the dramatic narrative with a concentrated sense of urgency, in contrast to the vast proportions of the St Matthew Passion. Many of the arias are deeply reflective and expressive, none more so than Es ist vollbracht!, in which the countertenor – Iestyn Davies – and the viola da gamba weave their melodies together in the most beguiling way."

Max Helfman: The Holy Ark
Slovak Chamber Choir; Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Samuel Adler
Raphael Frieder, cantor

Max Helfman (1901-1963) was Dean of Fine Arts at the Institute of Judaism in Los Angeles where the staff included such notables as Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco, Roy Harris and Lukas Foss.

Walter Lambe: Salve Regina

The Sixteen, Harry Christophers

Not much is known about English composer Walter Lambe (1450–1?–c.1504) whose extant works can be found in the Eton , Lambeth, and Caius Choirbooks.