

SAN FRANCISCO LYRIC CHORUS

Robert Gurney, *Music Director*

What Cheer!

Mostly Modern Takes on the Holiday Season



Poulenc

Walton

Jackson

Biebl

Rachmaninoff

Vaughan Williams

Mindy Lym, *Soprano*

Thomas Wade, *Baritone*

David Hatt, *Organ*

Saturday, December 2, 2017 7pm

Sunday, December 3, 2017 5pm

Mission Dolores Basilica

San Francisco, California

SAN FRANCISCO LYRIC CHORUS

Robert Gurney, Music Director

Helene Whitson, President

Bill Whitson, Treasurer

Julia Bergman, Secretary

Nora Klebow, Director

Monica Ricci, Director

Welcome to the Fall 2017 Concert of the San Francisco Lyric Chorus! Our program, *What Cheer! Mostly Modern Takes On The Holiday Season*, will put you in the mood for the joys of the season, with the ever popular Poulenc *Gloria* and Vaughan Williams *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*. We also sing smaller jewels, both sacred and secular.

Since its formation in 1995, the Chorus has offered diverse and innovative music to the community through a gathering of singers who believe in a commonality of spirit and sharing. The début concert featured music by Gabriel Fauré and Louis Vierne. The Chorus has been involved in several premieres, including Bay Area composer Brad Osness' *Lamentations*, Ohio composer Robert Witt's *Four Motets to the Blessed Virgin Mary* (West Coast premiere), New York composer William Hawley's *The Snow That Never Drifts* (San Francisco premiere), San Francisco composer Kirke Mechem's *Christmas the Morn, Blessed Are They, To Music* (San Francisco premieres), and selections from his operas, *John Brown* and *The Newport Rivals*, our 10th Anniversary Commission work, the World Premiere of Illinois composer Lee R. Kesselman's *This Grand Show Is Eternal*, Robert Train Adams' *It Will Be Summer—Eventually* and *Music Expresses* (West Coast premieres), as well as the Fall 2009 World Premiere of Dr. Adams' *Christmas Fantasy*. We are especially proud of our Summer 2015 performance of classical choral music performed at the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition, including the first American performance of Camille Saint-Saëns' oratorio, *The Promised Land*, since its American premiere and only American performance, which was given at the PPIE.

Please sign our mailing list, located in the foyer.

The San Francisco Lyric Chorus is a member of Chorus America.

We are recording this concert for archival purposes. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices before the concert. Please, no photography or audio/video taping during the performance.

Please, no children under 5. Please help us to maintain a distraction-free environment. Thank you.

PROGRAM

Francis Poulenc

Gloria

Gloria

Laudamus Te

Domine Deus

Domine Fili Unigenite

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei

Qui Sedes Ad Dexteram Patris

Mindy Lym, Soprano

***** *Intermission* *****

William Walton

What Cheer?

Stephen Jackson, arr.

Noël Nouvelet

Franz Biebl

Ave Maria

Mindy Lym, Soprano

Laura Heiman, Alto

Michael Desnoyers, Tenor

Thomas Wade, Baritone

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Bogoroditse Devo

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Wassail Song

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Fantasia on Christmas Carols

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Thomas Wade, Baritone

David Hatt, Organ

*****Please hold applause between pieces to spots marked *****

PROGRAM NOTES

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Francis Poulenc was born in Paris to a wealthy family in the pharmaceutical trade. At age five, he began studying piano with his mother, who was an excellent musician. He received his general education at the Lycée Condorcet; however, he was unable to enter the Paris Conservatory. The deaths of his mother (1915) and his father (1917) affected that plan.

Between 1914 and 1917, Poulenc studied piano with Ricardo Viñes, who became a mentor and influenced him to become a pianist and composer. Poulenc began composing in 1914, but destroyed his earliest work. His first composition, *Rhapsodie nègrè*, was premiered in 1917.

Through Viñes, Poulenc met such composers as Georges Auric, Eric Satie and Manuel de Falla. Through his childhood friend, Raymonde Linossier, he became acquainted with many contemporary French writers and poets, including Guillaume Apollinaire, Paul Eluard, André Breton, Louis Aragon, Andre Gide, Leon-Paul Fargue, Paul Valéry, and Paul Claudel. He later set to music many of their poems and other writings.

Poulenc always enjoyed playing and composing for the piano. As a young man, he worked without tutelage, even during his period of military service (1918 to 1921). He received recognition as a composer, but felt the need for more formal direction, so he began studying composition privately with Charles Koechlin. During this period, he accepted a commission from Sergei Diaghilev, Director of the Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo. Poulenc's ballet *Les biches* was first performed in 1924 and was a great success.

In the 1920s, he became a member of the famed "Les Six", a light-hearted, irreverent group of young French composers including Darius Milhaud, Georges Auric, Arthur Honegger, Germaine Tailleferre and Louis Durey. For many years, Poulenc's early music was not taken seriously because of the irreverent nature of his personal life. He was manic-depressive and would descend from ebullience to great despair, then bounce back again. He was one of the first openly gay composers, but he had a number of relationships with women and fathered a daughter.

Poulenc referred to himself as "Janus-Poulenc". It does seem as if he possessed two different musical personalities, both of which are apparent in his compositions. On the one hand, he is the iconoclastic, light-hearted, fun-loving youth of *Les mamelles de Tirésias*, his ballet *Les biches*, and his song cycle *Chansons françaises*. On the other, he evinces a genuine and heartfelt allegiance to the Catholic faith that he found later in life. He valued his friends and colleagues, and his association with baritone Pierre Bernac led to the composition of 90 of his wonderful songs. He was deeply affected by death - a close friend in an auto accident, his beloved friend Raymonde Linossier, his father - and the bleak pre-World War II atmosphere in France. He returned to his faith and began a serious output of religious music, beginning with the *Litanies à la vierge noire* in 1936. Other well-known choral works include the moving *Stabat Mater*, the energetic *Gloria*, the powerful opera *Dialogues des carmélites*, the tragic *La voix humaine*, the lovely *Quatre Petites Prières de Saint François d'Assise*, the vibrant and mystical

Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël, and the challenging Mass in G. Poulenc commented that his faith is "that of a simple country priest," and that in his religious music he tries "to give an impression of fervor and above all, humility, for me the most beautiful quality in prayer."

Francis Poulenc died in 1963. During his lifetime, he composed in a wide variety of formats, including both comic and serious opera, ballet, incidental music for theatre and film, orchestral music, chamber music, works for the piano, choral works, and solo vocal works. He also published a number of articles. Bayan Northcott notes that Poulenc was fond of quoting/borrowing/lifting music from other composers, including Monteverdi, Gluck, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Gounod, Offenbach, Massenet, Chabrier, Debussy, Satie, Ravel, Chopin, Sibelius, de Falla, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, "and the list goes on". Northcott says, "...a mature work such as the ever popular *Gloria* opens with a still more blatant theft of the beginning of Stravinsky's *Serenade in A*." Somehow, the normally litigious Stravinsky didn't seem to mind.

Gloria

Gloria is probably one of Poulenc's most well-known and popular works. Commissioned by the Koussevitsky Foundation, it was composed in 1959-1960 and premiered in Boston in 1961. In this six-movement work, Poulenc pays homage to Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi, whose six-movement *Gloria* is a choral staple.

The first movement, *Gloria*, is a bright, energetic statement of the text "Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis". Poulenc makes the movement lively through the use of double-dotted rhythms and ascending/descending lines.

Movement II, *Laudamus te*, is Poulenc at his playful best. The orchestra dances in, followed by the chorus tossing the phrase "Laudamus te" back and forth. The voices are together and apart as they weave their way through the text. For a moment, the mood is serious and chant-like as the altos intone "*Gratias agimus tibi*". It's soon back to play-time with "*Propter magnum gloriam tuam*". When some listeners were offended by this section, Poulenc commented that in writing this movement, he was "simply thinking of those Gozzoli frescoes in which the angels stick their tongues out, and also of a group of serious Benedictines I once saw playing football".

The third movement, *Domine Deus*, is more thoughtful and reverent. The soprano soloist calls gracefully to God in a beautiful, lyrical passage. She is joined by the chorus and together they praise God in his many forms. The movement ends with the soloist acknowledging "*Pater omnipotens*" while the chorus sings "*Gloria*".

Joyousness returns in Movement IV, *Domine fili unigenite*, praising Jesus. The movement contains rhythmic similarities to passages in the first movement.

Movement V, *Domine Deus, Agnus Dei*, is solemn and prayerful. Again the soprano soloist and the chorus call out to God together. Poulenc alternates the soaring lines of the soprano with the shorter choral phrases to illustrate their gentle yet demanding plea.

Movement VI, *Qui Sedes Ad Dexteram Patris*, concludes the work with another appeal, this time to Jesus. The chorus is majestically confident until the soprano soloist enters with a dramatic "Amen". The chorus quiets, contemplative in humility. Soloist and

chorus praise the Lord together and alternately. The soprano soloist brings the work to an end with the same *Amen* she uttered in the middle of the movement. The chorus responds, and she whispers a quiet *Amen* in conclusion.

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Laudamus Te

Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.

Domine Deus

Domine Deus, Rex caelstis, Deus Pater omnipotens.

Domine Fili Unigenite

Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris. Qui tollis peccata mundi, Miserere nobis. Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram.

Qui Sedes Ad Dexteram Patris

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus. Amen. Altissimus, Jesu Christe. Cum Sancto Spiritu, in Gloria Dei Patris. Amen

Gloria

Glory be to God on high,
And on earth peace to men of good will.

Laudamus Te

We praise Thee, we bless Thee,
We adore Thee, we glorify Thee,
We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory.
We praise Thee.

Domine Deus

Lord God, heavenly King, Father almighty,
Heavenly King, God the Father,
Almighty Father, God the Father, Glory.

Domine Fili Unigenite

Lord the only-begotten son, Jesus Christ.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei

Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father, heavenly King
Who taketh away the sins of the world,
Have mercy upon us,
Receive our prayer.

Qui Sedes Ad Dexteram Patris

Who sitteth at the right hand of the Father,
Have mercy upon us,
For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the
Lord, Amen.
Thou only art the most high, Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Ghost in the glory of God
the Father, Amen.

William Walton (1902-1983)

Born in 1902, William Walton is one of England's noted composers who appeared during the era of musical giants Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten. The son of a choir conductor and a singer, he sang in his father's church choir and at age 10 won a scholarship as a chorister in Oxford University's Christ Church Cathedral. Enrolled as a cathedral choir student until 1918, he sang in the choir and studied violin and piano, as well as starting to compose music. A *Litan*, his choral work written in 1916 and revised in 1930, is a remarkably mature work for a 14-year-old youth. In 1918, Walton entered Oxford University but left in 1920 before receiving his degree. He spent a lot of time in the university library, studying music of such contemporaries as Debussy, Richard Strauss, Schönberg, Ravel, Prokofiev and Stravinsky, as well as learning about orchestration. While at Oxford, he met the literary Sitwell family (Osbert, Edith and Sacheverell), who invited him to live in their home free of charge. He did so for more than ten years, spending much of his time composing music. He also was able to attend the ballet and opera and go to jazz clubs. Support from the Sitwells allowed him to compose as well as to meet such musical and literary luminaries as Ernest Ansermet, Peter Warlock, Frederick Delius, Igor Stravinsky, George Gershwin, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. He began his first major work, a piano quartet, as an Oxford student, completing it for performance in 1923. During the mid-1920s, Walton played piano with a jazz band for a year. *Façade*, an instrumental setting for a concurrent reading of Edith Sitwell's poetry, was presented to the public in 1926, and became popular almost immediately. It established Walton's reputation as a talented composer. His concert overture *Portsmouth Point* (1926), expressive *Viola Concerto* (1928-1929) and his dramatic cantata, *Belshazzar's Feast* (1930-1931), enhanced his growing reputation.

In the early 1930s, Walton left the Sitwell circle to explore other opportunities. He had several other patrons, including Siegfried Sassoon, Mrs. Samuel Courtauld and Lady Alice Wimbourne. At this time, in addition to composing in traditional forms of music, he began composing scores for radio and for motion pictures, later composing for television. He would compose for "the media" throughout the rest of his career. His motion picture scores include *Escape Me Never*, *The Foreman Went to France*, *The First of the Few*, *As You Like It*, *Major Barbara*, *Henry V* (nominated for an Academy Award), *Richard III*, *The Battle of Britain*, and *Three Sisters*. Television scores include *March: A History of the English-speaking People* (ABC-TV), *Preludes*, *Call Signs and End Music* for *Granada TV*, and Title Music for the *BBC Shakespeare Series*. Between 1947-1954, he composed an opera, *Troilus and Cressida*. The opera was a success at its Covent Garden premiere, as well as in New York and San Francisco productions, although it was not a success at La Scala. It was revised several times, the last between 1972-1976. His second opera, *The Bear*, was completed between 1965-1967.

Walton excelled in many different genres. He was known for his stately ceremonial music, similar to that of Edward Elgar. He wrote one of his most popular works, the *Crown Imperial March*, for the coronation of George VI in 1937 and the *Orb and Sceptre March* for the coronation of Elizabeth II. He also wrote very expressive works for solo instruments, including the *Viola Concerto* (1928-1929), *Violin Concerto* (1936-1939), and *Cello Concerto* (1955-1956), chamber music, such as his *String Quartet in A Minor* and

the *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, two symphonies and other orchestral music, music for band and brass ensembles, choral music and solo vocal music. He was knighted in 1951, and died in 1983.

What Cheer?

William Walton's *What Cheer?* was commissioned for the initial volume of Oxford University Press' choral series, *Carols for Choirs*. This hugely popular series, *Carols for Choirs 1-5*, plus *100 Carols for Choirs*, contains mainly English language Christmas carols, hymns, and anthems, and is used all over the world by church choirs, choruses, schools, and singers who want to go Christmas caroling. The initial editors were Reginald Jaques, conductor of The Bach Choir, and David Willcocks, Organist at King's College, Cambridge. Later editors include composers John Rutter and Bob Chilcott.

Jacques and Willcocks asked William Walton to compose a carol for that 1961 first volume (known to singers as *The Green Book*). Walton took his text from Richard Hill's early 16th century commonplace book, a notebook with all sorts of jottings, including transcripts of late medieval poems and carols. Walton's setting of this anonymous text follows the joyous spirit of the words—happiness for the wonder of Christmas, joy in family and friends, and best wishes for the New Year.

The members of the San Francisco Lyric Chorus follow that text and wish you happiness of the season, joy in family and friends, and best wishes for the New Year.

What cheer? Good cheer!
Be merry and glad this good New Year!

Lift up your hearts and be glad
In Christ's birth', the angel bade,
Say each to other, if any be sad:
'What cheer? What cheer?'

Now the King of heav'n his birth hath take,
Joy and mirth we ought to make:
Say each to other, for his sake:
'What cheer? What cheer?'

I tell you all with heart so free
Right welcome, welcome ye be to me:
Be glad and merry, for charity!
What cheer? Good cheer!
Be merry and glad this good New Year!

Stephen Jackson, arr.

Stephen Jackson is best known as a fine choral conductor. From 1989 to 2015, he conducted the BBC Symphony Chorus, working with such major orchestra conductors as Bernard Haitink, Pierre Boulez, Simon Rattle, Andrew Davis, and Roger Norrington, as well as working with such composer-conductors as Luciano Berio and John Adams. In addition, he often conducted the chorus himself, at such events as the Proms, on tour, and in the recording studio. He specializes in *a cappella* music, and expanded the repertoire of the BBC Symphony Chorus to include such large *a cappella* works as Sergei Rachmaninoff's *All Night Vigil*, Arnold Schoenberg's *Friede auf Erden*, and Francis Poulenc's *Figure humaine*. He also has conducted performances abroad, in Europe and the United States. In 2003, he conducted a performance of *The Messiah* in Japan. He occasionally conducted performances of the BBC's professional chorus, the BBC Singers. He worked regularly with choruses in other countries, including the Berlin and Netherlands Radio Choirs and the Choir of Radio France.

Jackson also was conductor of the Cheltenham Bach Choir from 1998 to 2013/2014. At present, he is the director of the Trinity Laban Conservatoire Chamber Choir, a position he has held since 1990. The London-based Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance is an internationally recognized training school for music and dance.

In addition, Stephen Jackson is busy as a composer and arranger, including arranging the French carol, *Noël Nouvelet*, which we sing today. He also has served as a teacher and adjudicator in workshops, conferences, and festivals worldwide.

Noël Nouvelet (New Christmas Song)

The popular French carol, *Noël nouvelet* is known in English by a number of other titles, including *Sing We Now of Christmas*, *Noel! A New Song!*, *Christmas Comes Anew*, and *Nowell, Sing Noel*. The earliest known lyrics date from the late 15th century, ca. 1491, and were discovered in a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. That set of lyrics is only one of many. No definitive version has been found. One French version, published in Troyes, France in 1721, has 13 verses and a completely different set of lyrics, except for the first verse. Most modern carol books use the text we sing today. The melody we sing may also date from the 15th century. Printed/written versions have been known since the 17th century. The melody has been used for a variety of hymn texts. Famed French organist/composer Marcel Dupré composed a set of organ variations on the tune. William Crump notes, "Because the French title "Noël nouvelet" literally means "new Christmas Song," this carol was also a favorite for the New Year celebration (falling in the midst of the twelve days of Christmas), and signified a new carol for the newborn King in a new year."

Noël Nouvelet

*Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.
Dévotes gens, crions à Dieu merci!
Chantons Noël pour le roi nouvelet.
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.*

*L'ange disait: 'Pasteurs, partez d'ici,
Lame en repos et le cœur réjoui;
En Bethléem trouverez l'agnelet.'
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.*

*En Bethléem, étant tous réunis,
Trouvent l'enfant, Joseph, Marie aussi.
La crèche était au lieu d'un bercelet.
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.*

*Bientôt les rois, par l'étoile éclaircis,
De l'Orient dont ils étaient sortis,
A Bethléem vinrent un matin.
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.*

*Voici mon Dieu, mon sauveur Jésus Christ,
Par qui sera le prodige accompli
De nous sauver par son sang vermeillet!
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.*

*Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.
Dévotes gens, crions à Dieu merci!
Chantons Noël pour le roi nouvelet.
Noël nouvelet, Noël chantons ici.*

Noël Nouvelet

"Noël Nouvelet", we sing a newborn King.
With our earthly song the firmament shall ring.
See how the love of God such joy doth bring.
'Noël Nouvelet' for Christ the newborn King.

'Shepherds from the fields, let gladness fill your mind.
Go to Bethlehem, the Lamb of God to find!'
Lo, from the sky the angel voices sing
'Noël Nouvelet' for Christ the newborn King.

Thus they left their sheep, and to the stable bare
Came with haste and found Joseph and Mary there.
With them they marvelled at this holy thing:
'Noël Nouvelet' for Christ the newborn King.

Soon the three wise men, who by a star were led,
Journeyed from the East, and at the lowly bed
Each bowed the knee and made an offering:
'Noël Nouvelet' to Christ the newborn King.

Take my heart, Lord Jesus, who for me wast slain,
Thou who on the Cross has borne my grief and pain,
Bringing me healing through Thy suffering.
'Noël Nouvelet' for Christ the heavenly King.

'Noël Nouvelet', we sing a newborn King.
With our earthly song the firmament shall ring.
See how the love of God such joy doth bring.
'Noël Nouvelet' for Christ the newborn King.

Franz Biebl (1906-2001)

German choral director, composer, and arranger Franz Biebl was born in Pursruck, Bavaria, a town now incorporated into the city of Freudenberg. He studied composition at the Musikhochschule in Munich. Between 1932 and 1939, he was the Choir Director at the Catholic church of St. Maria in München-Thalkirchen. In 1939, he became an Assistant Professor of Choral Music at the Salzburg Mozarteum, a university in Salzburg, Austria, that specializes in music and the dramatic arts. He taught voice and music theory.

In 1943, Biebl was drafted into the military, and in 1944, he was captured in Italy by American military. As a prisoner of war, he was brought to the United States and interned at Fort Custer in Battle Creek, Michigan, one of 5,000 German soldiers brought to that camp. He remained a prisoner of war until 1946, when he returned to Austria. During his time in Michigan, this modest, kindly man made friends with his American captors. They recognized his talents and allowed him to put on concerts for the POWs. Biebl learned about American music during his incarceration, including American folk songs and African-American spirituals, many of which he later arranged for chorus. In 1946, he returned to Austria. In 1948, he moved to Fürstenfeldbruck, Germany, a town near Munich, where until 1959 he served as organist, choir director, and teacher at the Stadtpfarrkirche. Between 1959 and his retirement in 1971, he was the head of the choral music division of the Bayerischen Rundfunk (Bavarian State Radio Broadcasting Company). During this time and even after retirement, he continued to compose, only stopping a few months before his death in 2001.

Ave Maria

Although he composed approximately 2,000 original choral works, as well as arrangements of folk songs and spiritual works from the Americas and Europe, Franz Biebl is known internationally for one composition—his 1964 *Ave Maria*. And that composition began with a fireman, who sang in Biebl's church choir! Wilbur Skeels, who published some of Biebl's other works, recounted the story. Many German businesses and public employee units, e.g., police and firemen, sponsor employee choruses. Often those choruses will perform in festivals and hold choral competitions. This particular fireman asked Biebl to compose a work that his fireman's chorus could use for such events. The result was the *Ave Maria* for double male chorus.

Biebl's *Ave Maria* may have been used by the fireman's chorus, but received no attention in Germany for a number of years. Its international fame began with the January 1970 Cornell University Men's Glee Club, conducted by Thomas A. Sokol, tour to Germany. As head of the Bavarian State Radio Broadcasting Company choral music division, Biebl often invited American choruses to come to Munich to perform on the radio and/or to perform with German choruses. The Glee Club was scheduled to record a program for the Frankfurt Radio Network. During the recording session, thoughtful comments about musicianship came floating out of the recording booth over a loud speaker. After the session, the commentator, Franz Biebl, came out of the recording booth and introduced himself. He gave Sokol some of his compositions to review, including Hungarian folk songs that the Glee Club used on later tours, and an *Ave Maria* for double male chorus. Sokol brought the works back to the United States for the Glee Club and began

performing them. The *Ave Maria* came to the attention of San Francisco's own Chanticleer, which embraced it as one of its 'signature tunes' and gave it world-wide popularity. Biebl later scored the composition for SATB chorus (the version we perform) and a version for treble voices.

The *Ave Maria* is a somewhat complex composition. It actually is a combination of two texts—that of the *Angelus*, a Catholic devotional service repeated three times, beginning with the ringing of a bell, and concluding with the phrase *Ave Maria, Sancta Maria*. This is the solo voice chant section. Instead of that concluding phrase, Biebl substitutes the more familiar *Ave Maria* prayer.

*Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae
et concepit de Spiritu sancto.*

*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
Et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus, Jesus.*

*Maria dixit: Ecce ancilla Domini.
Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*

*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
Et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus, Jesus.*

*Et Verbum caro factum est
et habitavit in nobis.*

*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
Et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus, Jesus.*

*Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen. Amen. Amen.*

The angel of the Lord spoke to Mary,
and she conceived according to the Holy Ghost.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Mary said, "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord.
Let it be unto me according to thy word."

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death.
Amen. Amen. Amen.

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

Sergei Vassilievich Rachmaninoff was born in 1873 at Oneg in the Novgorod region of Russia. His mother was the daughter of an Army General and his father was an Army officer. Due to a large inheritance from his mother's family, Sergei's parents were quite wealthy, owning several different estates. His father, however, squandered the family fortune, and all of the estates were sold, except the one at Oneg. It was here that Rachmaninoff's mother gave him his first piano lessons. By the time he was nine, the Oneg estate was sold to settle debts and the family moved to St. Petersburg, where Rachmaninoff continued his piano lessons and general education classes at the conservatory. His parents' relationship was strained, and they separated. Rachmaninoff failed all of his general subjects at the end of the year, and was sent to the Moscow Conservatory to study and live with Nikolay Zverev, a disciplinarian.

From 1885 through 1892, Rachmaninoff studied at the Moscow Conservatory. Although he originally studied under Zverev, he eventually started taking piano lessons from his own cousin, Aleksandr Ziloti. Zverev was more concerned with Rachmaninoff's piano technique and did not even consider Rachmaninoff's ability to compose music. Under Ziloti, Rachmaninoff began to compose and had a falling out with Zverev due to creative differences and a need for privacy. He moved out of Zverev's flat, and the two did not speak for three years.

In summer 1890, he visited a family at Ivanovka, a Russian country estate. A peaceful and quiet spot, it was just the place Rachmaninoff needed to compose. In fact, he composed around 85% of his works at Ivanovka, the place where he met his wife.

In 1892, Rachmaninoff graduated from the Moscow Conservatory with the highest mark, and received the Great Gold Medal. At that time, he composed his piano *Prelude in C# Minor*, probably his most famous work. He found composing easy, and had many successes. In March 1897, one of his symphonies received a poor review (possibly due to an inept conductor), causing in him such a great depression that he did not compose a major work for three more years. During that time, however, he began conducting operas at home and other works abroad. He made his London debut at Queen's Hall in 1899, conducting his own orchestral piece, *The Rock* and playing the *Prelude in C# minor*. In 1903, he agreed to conduct two seasons at the Bol'shoy Theater, and composed his own music when he was not preparing for Bol'shoy concerts.

In 1909, Rachmaninoff began his first year long American tour. He was received with great praise and was offered the position of permanent conductor of the Boston Symphony, which he declined. He did not return to the United States until November 1918,

and gave nearly 40 concerts within four months. In 1921, he and his wife bought a house in New York and tried to recreate the quiet atmosphere of Ivanovka. He rarely involved himself in politics, although in 1931 he and two friends sent a letter to the New York Times criticizing various policies of the Soviet Union. Moscow newspapers retaliated, and a two-year ban was placed on the performance and study of his works. For the next ten years, he toured Europe and North America, and built a villa in Switzerland. He never performed in Russia again. He wanted to retire, and decided that his 1942 tour would be his last. The tour took a tremendous toll on his health, and he died in March, 1943, at his home in Beverly Hills. He wanted to be buried at his Swiss villa, but World War II prohibited his wish. He was buried at the Kensico Cemetery outside New York.

During his lifetime, Rachmaninoff composed over 85 pieces, including symphonies, operas and choral works.

Bogoroditse Devo, Raduisya

This composition is the sixth of fifteen sections of Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil* (Op. 37), composed in 1915. This tender prayer strays from specific chant melodies into a freely composed style in which each voice follows its own individual line.

*Bogoroditse Devo, raduisya,
Blagodatnaya Mariye,
Gospod's Toboyu.
Blagoslovenna Ty v zhenakh,
I blagosloven plod chreva Tvoyego
Yako Spasa rodila yesi dash nashikh.*

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos (Mother of God),
Mary full of grace
The Lord is with Thee.
Blessed art Thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of Thy womb,
For Thou has borne the Saviour of our souls.

A Brief History of the English Carol

Christmas is a time of year that makes people think of family and friends, decorations and gifts, Santa Claus and snow, the seasons, and of the religious origins of the holiday. Most of all, Christmas is a holiday that is filled with music. Carols, those wonderfully familiar songs associated with this holiday, help to foster the special feeling this holiday brings.

The music of Christmas begins far in the past, when ancient cultures' festivals, rituals, and ceremonies (often surrounding the changing seasons and the conditions those changes created) frequently included music of various kinds. When Christianity became a dominant force, it incorporated many of those ancient rituals and practices into its own, including musical celebrations.

The origin of the term 'carol', shrouded in speculation, is explained in various theories. One definition relates it to ritual song and dance, beginning with the Greek *choros*, a circle dance accompanied by singing, used in dramatic performances, religious ceremonies, and fertility rites. It then became the Latin *choraula* which transformed into the medieval French *carole*, a French circle dance-song that was equally popular in court and country. The *carole* was written with a light-hearted dance rhythm, and was quite different from the more solemn music used in religious services. An excellent later example is *Ding Dong! Merrily on High*. The original melody was composed for the *Branle de l'official*, a lively circle dance found in *Orchésographie*, the 16th century dance treatise by Jehan Tabouret (pseudonym Thoinot Arbeau), 1520-1595. In the early 20th century, George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848-1934) set the words of this familiar carol to the dance tune we know today.

Although carols presented religious subjects, their texts were more secular and narrative than the theological treatments used for church services. The carol was designed to be enjoyed by the public as part of a festivity rather than worship. At times, it strayed pretty far from the religious nature of its content, often describing contemporary issues and ideas. Carols were written in Latin, in the vernacular (English, French, and German), and sometimes in macaronic text, a combination of Latin and a second language.

Sophie Jackson notes that the earliest Christmas music was not the Christmas carol, but the Latin hymn. St. Ambrose (338-397), Bishop of Milan between 374 and 397, is credited with penning the first Christmas hymn, *Veni, redemptor gentium* (*O Come, Redeemer of the Earth*). St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) was very influential in publicizing many of the elements of Christmas that we know today. Although the tradition of the infant in the manger probably originated in Italy in the 12th century, St. Francis was one of the first to promote the Nativity scene, portraying the baby, the Holy Family, and the farm animals surrounding the manger. Jackson comments that St. Francis' "role in instigating the writing and singing of carols turned the early Latin hymn into the festive music we know today. St. Francis's early life influenced him to use song as a way of teaching the secular public about Christ". His influence traveled abroad with the members of his order, the Franciscans. They went first to Spain, then France and Germany, arriving in England in 1224. Jackson notes that they began "composing new carols in English for the native population. The earliest extant English carol, 'A child is born amonges man', was found in a set of sermon notes written by a Franciscan friar before 1350".

The use of carols during festivals was not limited to Christmas season events. Carols were used in the celebration of events throughout the entire year. Benjamin Britten's *Spring Carol*, part of his *Ceremony of Carols*, sets William Cornysh's (1465?-1523) poem about the joys of Spring with lilting, dancing rhythms:

Pleasure it is
To hear iwis, (certainly)
The Birdes sing.
The deer in the dale,
The sheep in the vale,
The corn springing...

Carols also celebrated social/political events. The 15th century *Agincourt Carol* rejoiced in the English victory over the French in the 1415 Battle of Agincourt:

Deo gratias anglia, redde pro victoria.
Owre kynge went forth to Normandy,
With grace and myght of chyvalry;
Ther God for hym wrought mervlously,
Wherfore Englonde may calle and cry,
Deo gratias,
Deo gratias anglia, redde pro victoria...

The English carol became a firm part of Christmas festivities between 1400 and 1550. These compositions were mostly popular religious songs that dealt with aspects of Christ's nativity, including the annunciation, the birth, the Nativity scene, and Mary, the Virgin Mother, the Rose of Virtue. It was during this time that the carol moved inside the church. It was not usually part of the liturgy, but was often used as a processional song. Such carols were structured with a refrain sung by a chorus and verses sung by soloists.

The old world order began to crumble at the beginning of the 16th century. Martin Luther, an iconoclastic German priest who broke away from the Catholic Church, began the Protestant Reformation, a Christian reform movement (1517-1648) that spread across Europe. Luther loved music and believed it was an important part of a religious service. He composed several folk-style hymns, including *Von Himmel Hoch (From Heaven on High)*, that are still popular today.

The Protestant Reformation greatly affected the use of the carol in England. English church music became more austere, using only the sung metrical psalm and anthems within the service. Carols continued to be sung in the home and at other nonofficial religious gatherings.

In 1649, Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans executed King Charles I and took control of the throne. The Puritans were very conservative, Calvinistic Protestants who decried what they saw to be a decadent society rife with wasteful and hedonistic activities. Concerned with moral and ecclesiastical purity in home, church, and public life, they felt abused by the monarchy and more moderate, albeit Protestant, Church of England. Once in power, they instituted social and religious practices that conformed to their views. They believed that carols had pagan origins, and Cromwell wanted them banned. The 16th and 17th centuries in England were a time of fear and intimidation, a time when certain citizens were accused of witchcraft. One of the signs of being a witch was having been heard singing carols! Parliament finally banned the singing of carols, although they still were sung in some remote villages and rural churches.

The Puritans' austere reign lasted until 1660, when Cromwell's son, Richard, who succeeded his father in 1658, was overthrown. Charles II, son of the executed king, reestablished the monarchy, the Church of England, and Parliament as controlling powers. As a result, carols returned but not to the mainstream churches. They were sung at home and in non-church settings. New carols were composed, and at Christmas time, carolers regularly went door-to-door, singing. The anonymous *New Carolls For This Merry Time*

of Christmas, published in 1661, was the first book of carols to be published in post Reformation England.

One cannot recount the history of the carol without mentioning the role of Jaakko Suomalainen, Headmaster of the Turko Cathedral School in Finland. In 1582, he created *Piae Cantiones*, a remarkable collection of 74 late Medieval Latin songs that were sung in Finnish cathedral schools. The songs, of Bohemian, German, French and English origin, were also familiar to adults. This collection is particularly important in the preservation of many familiar English carol tunes because of the Puritan ban of the celebration of Christmas and the singing of carols. The collection includes these familiar works: *Personent hodie*, *Gaudete*, *Resonet in laudibus*, *In Dulci Jubilo*, *Puer Nobis Nascitur*, and *Tempus Adest Floridum*. This latter spring song was relatively unknown until the 19th century, when John R. Neale borrowed the tune to set his newly written text, *Good King Wenceslas*.

During the late 17th and 18th centuries, the styles and types of celebrations changed and the use of English carols declined in churches. Music scholars and folk song collectors worried that these songs would be lost, so they began to collect them before they disappeared. In 1822, Davies Gilbert, a Cornish Member of Parliament, published the first modern collection of traditional carols, *Some Ancient Christmas Carols*. In 1833, William Sandys, a London lawyer, who appreciated history and things of the past, published *Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern*. Ian Bradley comments, "Among the carols preserved by Sandys and Gilbert which might otherwise have fallen into oblivion were 'God rest you merry, gentlemen', 'The first Nowell', and 'I saw three ships come sailing in'." In 1846, John Broadwood of Sussex published a collection of wassail songs, the *Little Book of Carols*.

Bradley notes, "Carols played an important role in the Victorian reinvention of Christmas as a largely domestic festival full of sentimentality and good cheer. A huge number of new carols were written in the mid-nineteenth century, many in a pseudo-traditional style... It was the Victorians, rather than Bing Crosby, who invented the concept of the White Christmas, bringing snow into the Nativity story with Christina Rossetti's 'In the bleak midwinter' and Edward Caswall's 'See, amid the winter snow'... American writers were equally infused with the sentimental spirit of the Victorian Christmas, producing 'Away in a manger', 'O little town of Bethlehem', 'We three kings of Orient are', and 'It came upon the midnight clear'."

Carols returned to the English church on Christmas Eve in 1878. Ian Bradley comments that the 10 p.m. service in the new Truro Cathedral "included two lessons, prayers, and a sermon interspersed with carols. Two years later the service was expanded to a festival of nine lessons and carols, providing a model that was taken up in 1918 at King's College, Cambridge, and subsequently by many parish churches and cathedrals."

Keyte and Parrott comment that in the mid-19th century, new carols of varying quality were being composed using both new and old tunes, such as those found in the *Piae Cantiones*. They note that "around the turn of the (20th) century...G(eorge) R(atcliffe) Woodward initiated the plundering of the European carol repertoires in an attempt to satisfy the seemingly insatiable appetite of choirs for fresh seasonal material. To him we owe the enrichment of the native English tradition by some of the finest French,

Basque, Provençal, Czech and Bohemian traditional carols."

In the 20th century, the production of several major English carol compilations made important and familiar works of our cultural heritage available to a wide number of people. In 1928, Percy Dearmer, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Martin Shaw compiled the *Oxford Book of Carols*. This book became the gold standard of carol compilations until 1961, when Reginald Jacques and David Willcocks compiled the familiar green *Carols For Choirs 1*, and David Willcocks and John Rutter compiled the orange *Carols For Choirs 2*. In 1987, Willcocks and Rutter compiled *100 Carols For Choirs*. This volume contains many of the old favorites, as well as several new arrangements that are found nowhere else.

In 1992, Hugh Keyte and Andrew Parrott published the *New Oxford Book of Carols*. It is not a new edition of the 1928 *Oxford Book of Carols*. Keyte and Parrott comment, "We came to realize, too, how restricted the current repertory has become: whole genres which deserve to be widely known have been steadfastly ignored or laid aside, and in many individual cases a single 'standard' musical setting has replaced former glorious diversity. Our initial conception of a very basic and deliberately limited collection expanded enormously as we came to grips with the realities of the project... More or less the entire repertory current in the English-speaking world is represented and we have gone far beyond this (and our initial scheme) in five areas that seem to us to have been most unjustly neglected by modern anthologies: medieval Latin song; the fifteenth century English carol; the German Christmas chorale; the Christmas hymns of the English 'gallery composers'; and those of their American 'primitive' and shape-note counterparts".

This essay has looked mainly at the English carol and at English compilations of carols. But I cannot forget the copy of my own tattered, candlewax-stained, paper-covered American compilation of traditional and favorite carols—Theodore Preuss's *Christmas in Song*. First published in 1947 by Rubank in Chicago, this beloved and widely available compilation is now published by Hal Leonard.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Composer, teacher, writer and conductor, Ralph Vaughan Williams is one of the most beloved modern English composers and one of the giants of 20th century English music. Considered the most important English composer of his generation and the first major English composer since the 17th century's Henry Purcell, he was a crucial figure in the revitalization of 20th century English music. Born in Gloucestershire in 1872, he was encouraged to study music as a child, learning piano, violin, organ and viola. He became interested in composition at an early age, and looked toward composition as a career. He attended the Royal College of Music in London, studying with well-known composers/teachers Charles Villiers Stanford and Hubert Parry, as well as Trinity College, Cambridge, where he received both his Bachelor's degree (1894) and Doctorate in Music (1901). At Trinity, he met composer Gustav Holst, with whom he formed a close, life-long musical friendship. Another classmate, philosopher Bertrand Russell, introduced him to the poetry and ideas of Walt Whitman. Vaughan Williams felt the need of further musical education, studying with Max Bruch in Berlin (1897) and Maurice Ravel

in Paris (1907) After his return from abroad, he became interested in English folksongs, as well as music of the Tudor and Jacobean periods. He was editor of *The English Hymnal* from 1904-1906, rediscovering old tunes, adapting some from folksongs and writing some himself. He also was a major contributor to the *Oxford Book of Carols*. In 1919, he became a Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music, at the same time being in demand as a conductor and composer. In 1921, he was appointed conductor of London's Bach Choir, a position he held until 1928, when he moved to the village of Dorking. For many years, he was involved in the Leith Hill Musical Festival, a competitive festival for village/town choruses in the Leith Hill area of Surrey, England. His later life was devoted to composition, conducting and occasional lectures. He visited the United States several times, lecturing at Bryn Mawr, Cornell, Indiana University, Yale, the University of Michigan and UCLA. He died in 1958.

Vaughan Williams was keenly aware of the horrors of war. He volunteered for service in World War I (1914-1918), enlisting in the Field Ambulance Service, where he was posted to France and Greece, and later serving as an officer in the Royal Garrison Artillery, where he served with the British Expeditionary Force in France. He was deeply affected by what he saw, and lost close friends in the war, including his wife's brother, Charles, music patron and conductor F. B. Ellis, composer George Butterworth, and later his own student, Ivor Gurney, a promising composer and poet, who had been gassed, shell-shocked and driven insane by his experiences in that war.

Ralph Vaughan Williams composed in a wide variety of genres, including works for stage, opera, symphonies, smaller works for orchestra, works for chorus and orchestra, *a cappella* choral music, songs, arrangements of English folksongs, arrangements of carols, chamber music, music for the theatre, music for films and music for radio programs. He was gifted in composing vocal music for choruses as well as for solo voice. He is recognized for his settings of English language poetry (including that of Walt Whitman, whose poetry he uses in both the *Sea Symphony* and the *Dona Nobis Pacem*.) Among his better known works are *A Sea Symphony*, *Serenade to Music*, the *Fantasia on Greensleeves*, the operas *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Sir John in Love*, the *Mass in G Minor*, *Hodie, Fantasia on Christmas Carols* and the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*.

Wassail Song

Cinnamon, cloves, ginger, nutmeg! Lemons and oranges and roasted apples! Molasses, sugar, eggs, milk! Hot cider, wine, or ale! Thin slices of toast! All of these ingredients have been combined in various ways over time to make the holiday beverage known as *wassail*. The term comes from the Anglo-Saxon greeting *wes hael* (be well, to your health). It possibly originated around the fifth century when Saxons honored British King Vortigern by offering him a bowl of ale and wishing him good health. That event created a custom through which one can honor a friend by offering a beverage, along with wishes for good health. The recipient takes the beverage and replies, "I drink (to) your health" before consuming the drink. If the beverage were taken from a *wassail bowl* with thin slices of toast floating on top, the ceremony was known as 'toasting'. Today we don't need the toast in the bowl to follow the custom.

William Crump notes that by the 16th century, the beverage and the floating toast slices

were called *wassail*. The act of toasting was called *wassailing*, and the container that held the beverage was known as the *wassail bowl*. Excessive toasting and drinking also were called *wassail*. Such jollity often took place around holiday feasts, especially at Christmas. Originally guests at a feast would pass the *wassail bowl* and drink from it, but later each person had his/her own mug or glass.

Toasting/*wassailing* is not just for people. It also includes trees/orchards. William Crump comments that in pre-Christian times, winter revelers would take the *wassail bowl* to their orchards, sing and pour the *wassail* on the tree trunks and roots, hoping to increase the fruit tree yield in the next year. (You can see examples on YouTube.) *The Apple Tree Wassail* refers specifically to this custom. Christians adopted this custom by holding the ceremony during the twelve days of Christmas.

From this activity comes the custom of groups of singers/carolers going door to door during the holidays, wishing everyone good health during the holidays and in the coming New Year. Sometimes those being serenaded would bring *wassail* outside to the carolers, and sometimes the carolers would be invited in for their beverages, also being encouraged to sing some more. Crump notes that the modern party punch bowl descends from the *wassail bowl*.

While carolers sing all sorts of holiday songs today, traditional carols as well as popular songs, such as *White Christmas* or *Little Drummer Boy*, some of the traditional carols explicitly refer to the *wassailing* tradition, including *We Wish You A Merry Christmas* ("now bring us some figgy pudding"), *Here We Come A-Caroling/Wassailing*, and *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*.

There are many different variants of the *Wassail Song*, both in text and tune, depending on the county from which they come. Versions come from Yorkshire, Somerset, the Gower Peninsula in Wales, Cornwall, and more. *Wassailing* also came to America with immigrants from the British Isles. *The Kentucky Wassail* is very American, with the first verse:

Wassail, wassail, all over the town,
Our cup is white and our ale brown.
The cup is made from the old oak tree,
And the ale is made in Kentucky,
So it's joy be to you and a jolly wassail.

Ralph Vaughan Williams sets the version from Gloucestershire:

Wassail, wassail, all over the town,
our bread it is white and our ale it is brown;
our bowl it is made of the green maple tree;
in the wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee. Wassail.

Here's a health to the ox and to his right eye,
pray God send our master a good Christmas (meat/game) pie,
a good Christmas pie as e'er I did see.
In the wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee. Wassail.

Here's a health to the ox and to his right horn,
pray God send our master a good crop of corn
(*all cereals: oats, wheat, barley, etc.*),
a good crop of corn as e'er I did see.
In the wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee. Wassail.

Here's a health to the ox and to his long tail,
pray God send our master a good cask of ale,
a good cask of ale as e'er I did see.
In the wassail bowl we'll drink unto thee. Wassail.

Come butler come fill us a bowl of the best;
then I pray that your soul in heaven may rest;
but if you bring us a bowl of the small (*ale with little alcohol content*),
may the Devil take butler, bowl and all! Wassail.

Then here's to the maid in the lily white smock,
who tripp'd to the door ad slipp'd back the lock;
who tripp'd to the door and pull'd back the pin,
for to let these jolly wassailers walk in.

Wassail, wassail, all over the town, wassail.

Fantasia on Christmas Carols

Written in 1912, the *Fantasia* reflects Vaughan Williams' interest in both English folk songs and the soaring lines of Tudor music. In this work, Vaughan Williams deftly interweaves four beautiful English carols—*The Truth From Above*, *The Somerset Carol*, *On Christmas Night*, and *There Is A Fountain*, together with fragments of other well-known carols.

This is the truth sent from above,
The truth of God, the God of Love:
Therefore don't turn me from your door
But hearken all, both rich and poor.

The first thing which I will relate
Is that God did man create,
The next thing which to you I'll tell,
Woman was made with man to dwell.

Then, after this, 'twas God's own choice
To place them both in paradise,
There to remain, from evil free,
Except they ate of such a tree.

And they did eat, which was a sin,
And thus their ruin did begin,
Ruined themselves, both you and me
And all of their posterity.

Thus we were heirs to endless woes.
Till God the Lord did interpose,
And so a promise soon did run,
That he would redeem us by his Son.

Come all you worthy gentlemen that may be standing by,
Christ our blessed Saviour was born on Christmas day,
The blessed Virgin Mary unto the Lord did pray
O we wish you the comfort and tidings of joy!

Christ our Blessed Saviour now in the manger lay,
He's lying in the manger, while the oxen feed on hay.
The blessed Virgin Mary unto the Lord did pray
O we wish you the comfort and tidings of joy!

On Christmas night all Christians sing
To hear the news the angels bring;
News of great joy, news of great mirth,
News of our merciful King's birth.

When sin departs before thy grace
Then life and health come in its place,
Angels and men with joy may sing,
All for to see the new-born King

God bless the ruler of this house, and long may he reign,
Many happy Christmases he live to see again!
God bless our generation, who live both far and near
And we wish them a happy New Year
Both now and evermore. Amen.

Program notes by Helene Whitson

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PERFORMERS

Robert Gurney, Music Director

Co-Founder and Music Director Robert Gurney is Organist-Choir Director at San Francisco's historic Trinity Episcopal Church, Assistant Organist at San Francisco's St. Mary's Cathedral, and Organist at Marin County's Temple Rodef Shalom.

A resident of San Francisco since 1978, he has been an active church musician, organ recitalist, vocal coach, and has served as Interim Assistant Organist at Grace Cathedral, and Assistant Conductor-Accompanist for the San Francisco Choral Society, the Sonoma City Opera and the Contra Costa Chorale. For seventeen years he was Museum Organist at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, where he performed over 300 recitals on the museum's E.M. Skinner organ.

A native of Ohio, he received his education at Youngstown State University and the Cleveland Institute of Music, studying conducting with William Slocum. At Youngstown, he served as Student Assistant Conductor of the Concert Choir that won first place in a college choir competition sponsored by the BBC. In Summer 1997, he was invited to participate in an international choral music festival Music Of Our Time, held in Parthenay, France, and directed by John Poole, Conductor Emeritus, BBC Singers. He studied again with Maestro Poole in a June 2003 workshop sponsored by the San Francisco Lyric Chorus.

Robert Gurney has directed the San Francisco Lyric Chorus in innovative performances of little-known works by composers of exceptional interest. The Chorus' *Discovery Series* has introduced an eight-part Ave Maria by Tomás Luis de Victoria, the West Coast premiere of *Four Motets To The Blessed Virgin Mary*, by Robert Witt, music of Amy Beach, including her monumental *Grand Mass in E Flat* and the *Panama Hymn*, written for San Francisco's 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition, John Blow's 1684 St. Cecilia's Day Ode, *Begin the Song*, Georg Frideric Handel's *Te Deum in A Major*, Michael Haydn's *Requiem*, Canadian composer Sul Irving Glick's *The Hour Has Come*, Thomas Tallis' *Missa Puer Natus Est Nobis*, late 18th/early 19th century Afro-Brazilian composer José Maurício Nunes Garcia's *Requiem*, Antonín Dvorák's *Six Moravian Choruses* (arranged by Janácek), the 1945 *Mass* by Belgian composer Joseph Jongen, premieres of works by San Francisco composer Kirke Mechem, including selections from his operas *John Brown* and *The Rivals*, and the San Francisco Lyric Chorus' 10th Anniversary commissioned work, *This Grand Show Is Eternal*, a setting of naturalist John Muir's texts, by Illinois composer Lee R. Kesselman. He conducted the San Francisco Lyric Chorus in its special Summer 2015 20th anniversary concert, celebrating classical choral music at San Francisco's 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition, and featuring Camille Saint-Saëns' oratorio, *The Promised Land*, which had not been performed in the United States since its American premiere and sole performance at the PPIE.

PERFORMERS

Mindy Lym, Soprano

Mindy Lym is a San Francisco native, voice teacher and career mentor. She most recently performed as Maria in *West Side Story* at The Mountain Play for which she was honored to receive a 2017 Bay Area Theatre Critic's Circle Nomination. In Spring 2018 Ms. Lym will be appearing in Berkeley Playhouse's *Ragtime*, in the role of "Mother" (www.BerkeleyPlayhouse.org).

Other stage credits include the TheatreWorks Silicon Valley renditions of *Sweeney Todd* (Johanna), *Being Earnest* (Gwendolen - Bay Area Theatre Critic's Circle Nomination), and *Emma* (Jane Fairfax, U/S Emma), as well as Contra Costa Musical Theatre's *Evita* (Eva Peron – Shellie Award), Center Repertory Theatre's productions of *Spelling Bee* (Olive) and *All Shook Up* (Natalie/Ed), and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (Christine Colgate) at Broadway By The Bay and *West Side Story* (Maria – Best Actress, StageSceneLA) at the PCPA.

Ms. Lym has been teaching voice for more than a decade. She believes in addressing the whole person, which includes but is not limited to vocal building, intensive acting training, spiritual development and self-empowerment. She has had students in the Broadway National Tours of *Cats*, *Catch Me If You Can* and *Wicked*, and some of the best regional theatres across the nation. In 2010 she founded Vocal Forum NYC, a donation based platform for professional musical theatre training, and returned home to the Bay Area in 2012 to pick up the tradition and vocal studio left to her by her late mentor, Mr. Richard Nickol. To learn more about Ms. Lym's teaching and performing go to www.MindyLym.com. Ms. Lym was the Soprano soloist in our Spring 2017 performances of Antonín Dvorák's *Te Deum* and Zoltán Kodály's *Missa Brevis*.

Laura Heiman, Alto

Laura earned a Bachelor of Music degree in vocal performance from California State University, Northridge. She pursued a career in music for several years: Laura was a regional finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, toured the U.S. and Japan with the Roger Wagner Chorale and sang such roles as the title role in *La Cenerentola* by Rossini and Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart, along with concert and recital performances. Laura decided to attend law school in New York City and now has been practicing law for more than 20 years. Having recently relocated to San Francisco she is delighted to be making music with San Francisco Lyric Chorus. She was the alto soloist in our Summer 2016 presentation of Joseph Haydn's *Mass in Time of War*, as well as one of the alto soloists in our Spring 2017 presentation of Zoltán Kodály's *Missa Brevis*.

Michael Desnoyers, Tenor

Sought out for his "rich and resonant" and "sweet, well-projected lyric tenor," Michael Desnoyers has sung over 50 different roles across San Francisco Bay Area stages, including performances with Opera San Jose, West Bay Opera, West Edge Opera, Festival Opera, Lamplighters Music Theatre, Cinnabar Theatre, Ars Minerva, Pocket Opera, and

PERFORMERS

the Handel Opera Project. Highlights from 2017 include Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, Ramiro in *La Cenerentola*, and Sextus in *Giulio Cesare*.

Praised for “a beautifully produced, even voice whose palpable sincerity and flawless legato seemed ideally suited to Mozart,” he has performed most of the major roles in the Mozart tenor repertoire, including Belmonte in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, and the title role in *La clemenza di Tito*.

With an extensive repertoire that spans from the Baroque to the 21st Century, Mr. Desnoyers has sung a number of world premieres, including the modern world premiere of Daniele da Castrovilli's 1662 opera *La Cleopatra*. In 2014, he created the role of Marcus in Giancarlo Aquilanti's *The Oxford Companions*. Other favorite roles include Albert in *Albert Herring*, Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Frederic in *The Pirates of Penzance*, Nanki-Poo in *The Mikado*, and Bénédict in *Béatrice et Bénédict*. He frequently performs as a concert soloist, having sung Mozart's Requiem, Coronation Mass, Great Mass in C Minor, and Vespere solennes; Bach's *Johannes-Passion* and *Matthäus-Passion*; Handel's *Messiah*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*, CPE Bach's *Magnificat*, and Dvorak's *Mass in D*.

Mr. Desnoyers can be heard on the Lamplighters' CD recordings, singing the roles of Cyril in *Princess Ida*, Ernest in *The Grand Duke*, and of Lord Tolloller in *Iolanthe*, where he was praised by Opera News for his “crystal clear timbre.” Mr. Desnoyers was a member of Chautauqua Opera Young Artist program where he performed the role of Monostatos (*Die Zauberflöte* 2011) and covered the role of Spoletta (*Tosca* 2009). He has performed with many Bay Area vocal ensembles, including the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, American Bach Soloists, Capella SF, and Gaude.

A passionate and active supporter of music education, Mr. Desnoyers is an Artist in Residence at Ruth Asawa School of the Arts, where he conducts the tenor/bass ensemble *The Clef Hangers*, stage directs opera, and teaches vocal technique, musicianship, diction, and jazz history. He has performed with the San Francisco Opera Guild's program *Opera a la Carte* for seven seasons, bringing shortened versions of popular operas to elementary and middle schools. www.michaeldesnoyers.com

Thomas Wade, Baritone

Thomas Wade, baritone, specializes in early music and French melodie. He appears regularly with Ragazzi Continuo, San Francisco Renaissance Voices, and San Francisco Lyric Chorus, and is the bass section leader at Trinity-St. Peter's Episcopal Church. In addition to teaching voice and performing, Mr. Wade dedicates his time to musicology and language learning as he believes that it is essential to be studied in both disciplines in order to present a thoughtful and accurate program. Mr. Wade was the San Francisco Lyric Chorus baritone soloist in our Fall 2016 program, *Brush Up Your Shakespeare!* He also was the baritone soloist in our Spring 2017 performances of Antonín Dvorák's *Te Deum* and Zoltán Kodály's *Missa Brevis*. Mr. Wade holds a bachelors degree in vocal performance from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

PERFORMERS

David Hatt, Organ

David Hatt has been a working organist for over fifty years. He obtained a Master's Degree from the University of California, Riverside, following study with Raymond Boese and Barney Childs.

Since 1992, he has given over a hundred recitals at St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco, where in 1998 he was appointed Assistant Cathedral Organist. He has also given over fifty recitals at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Reno.

His organ works have been published by Wayne Leupold Editions, Darcey Press and Augsburg Fortress. He has appeared three times with the San Francisco Symphony and has recently been the Interim Organist at Grace Cathedral.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The San Francisco Lyric Chorus sends a warm, special thanks to:

Music Director Robert Gurney, who continues to lead and inspire.

The SFLC Board of Directors, whose thoughtful and creative ideas, as well as dedicated work, guide us as we explore the vast world of choral music and look to the future of sharing it with our audiences.

Soprano Monica Ricci who used her wonderful marketing and social media knowledge and skills to let the world know the SFLC is here.

Bass Jim Bishop for his excellent management of our chorus ticket sales.

Alto Alana D'Attilio for cheerfully and valiantly finding us our wonderful chorus volunteers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Robert Gurney

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Julia Bergman, Altos
Jim Losee, Tenors
Jim Bishop, Basses

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MANAGER
Monica Ricci

PROGRAM PREPARATION

Helene Whitson

POSTCARD/FLYER DESIGN

Monica Ricci

PROGRAM DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Beverly Schmidt [design]
Bill Whitson [layout]

MAILING LIST DATABASE MGT

Bill Whitson

RECORDING

Bill Whitson

CHORUS WEBSITE DESIGN

Sophie Henry

WEBSITE MAINTENANCE

Bill Whitson

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The San Francisco Lyric Chorus is a completely self-supporting independent organization, with a budget of about \$15,000 each 4-month season, or \$45,000 per year.

- ▶ 26% of our income comes from Chorus member dues
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Please consider supporting us so that we can continue to expand the size of the choir, promote our concerts more effectively, reach more people with our beautiful music, and build new relationships with San Francisco schools and other cultural groups!

Donation envelopes are available at the box office.

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You can also donate online to our Generosity campaign at
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All contributors will be acknowledged in our concert programs. For further information, e-mail info@sflc.org or call (415) 721-4077.

The San Francisco Lyric Chorus is chartered by the State of California as a non-profit corporation and approved by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 organization. Donations are tax-deductible as charitable contributions.

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For as little as \$30, you can support the San Francisco Lyric Chorus by "adopting" your favorite singer. For \$100, you can sponsor an entire section (soprano, alto, tenor, or bass!) For \$150, you can adopt our very special Music Director, Robert Gurney.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Chorus Thank-you's

The listed choristers wish to thank those individuals who have inspired our efforts and have supported our singing commitment to the Lyric Chorus.

Valerie Howard

Thanks to Shirley Drexler for playing recorders every week.

Monica Ricci

Thank you to all of the San Francisco Lyric Choristers who have participated in our engaging social media campaigns this year.

Our audiences and fans have grown to know us better as individuals, and have seen us come together to create our blended voice. One chorister put it so perfectly: "Singing in a choir is not about the individual, it's something bigger than that. It's bigger than a bunch of people with matching clothes."

If you have been following us on Facebook, you can appreciate what diverse interests and backgrounds we have. Riding motorcycles. Nail art. Moveable pop-up children's books. One chorister has performed in national Broadway tour. One has performed for Maria von Trapp of the Sound of Music fame. One celebrated her 100th birthday this year! But one thing unifies us all: the love and camaraderie of performing as a group.

We hope that this love comes through as we sing for you. To learn more about our choristers, visit our Facebook page, SF Lyric Chorus, and scroll through our posts.

Susie Williams

Thanks to my husband, Adam, for his support in giving me time to practice on weekends and speedy dinner between work and rehearsals.

Thanks to my son Milo, for his pro skills with goodbye hugs & kisses before rehearsals, and to my son Henry for his musical knowledge and sweet, patient help with my music during car trips around the city!

Congratulations to Henry for his performance in Turandot with the SF Opera this fall! Congratulations to Milo for his team's undefeated record in soccer this fall!

Helene Whitson

Thank you, Lyric Choristers, for this joyous Fall season of holiday music! What fun we've had discovering the different kinds of cheer that exists in the music performed at this time of year. What cheer? Why, good cheer, of course! I tell you all with heart so free; Right welcome, welcome ye be to me! In fact, we certainly couldn't have done it without you!

Thank you, Robert, for your wonderful leadership, patient guidance, sense of humor, and sensitive teaching and conducting skills. You inspire and challenge us to be the very best we can, so that our community of singers can share the beauty of choral music with all who hear us. (Continued...)

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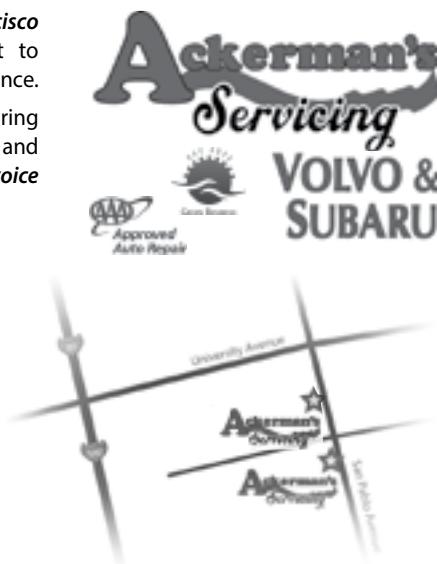
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Thank you, Bill for everything. You are bedrock, a foundation that helps the SFLC be the very best it can be. Thank you for all that you do for the chorus. You make an incredible difference!

We couldn't do what we do without the wonderful support, ideas, and work of our fabulous Board of Directors. We are so grateful to have such a dedicated group of volunteers, willing to share their time, knowledge, and expertise so that we can bring wonderful choral music programs to our audiences.

Thank you also to our dedicated Section Representatives. They are our eyes and ears, working with their sections and our Music Director to create beautiful music.

Thank you to our wonderful donors and contributors and our marvelous audiences, who make our concerts possible. We appreciate your confidence in us and in our music, and we look forward to sharing exciting music with you in the future.

Thank you to our valiant volunteers, who generously give of their time to help with our chorus tasks. All the work that you do makes a difference.

Thank you all for making the San Francisco Lyric Chorus the very special organization that it is. Helene

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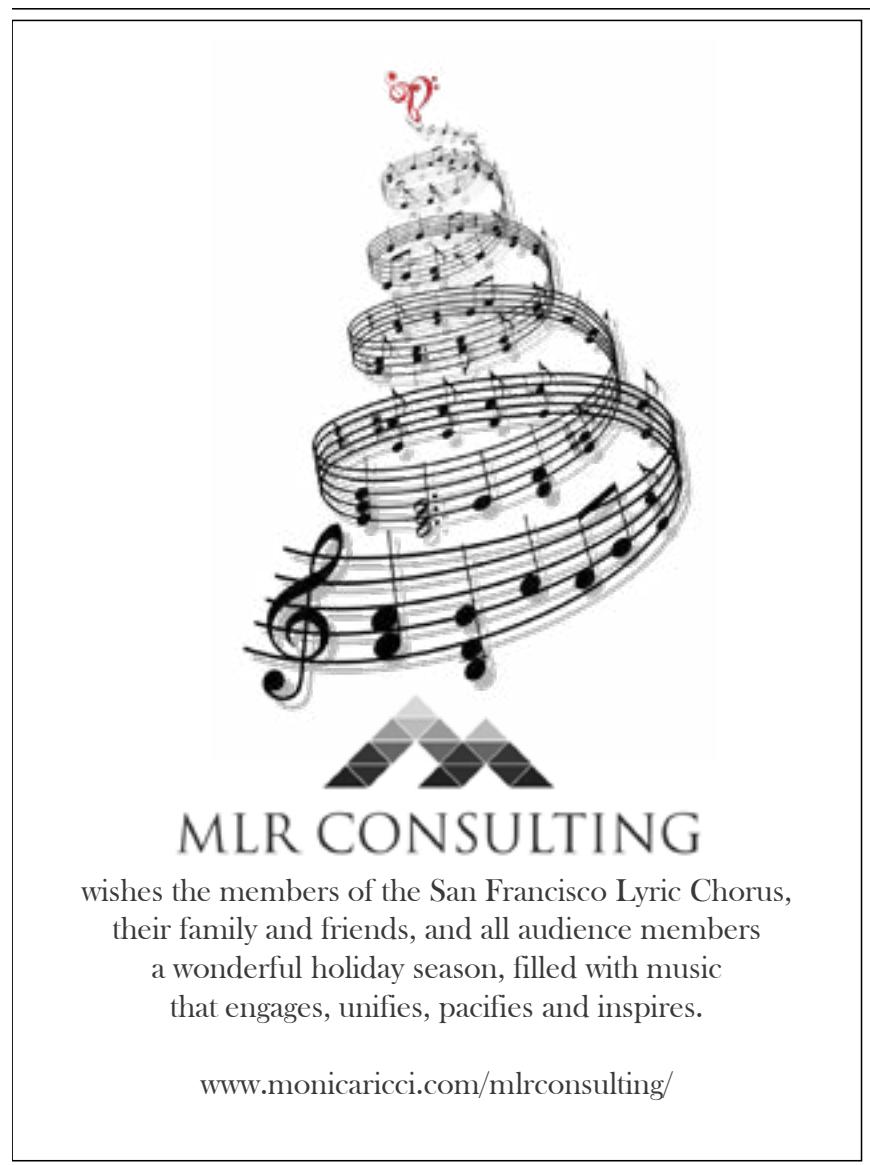
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Laura McDowell
Kelsey Michaelson
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Antoinette Catalla
Caroline Crawford
Alana D'Attilio
Lara Greene
Laura Heiman
Barbara Landt
Karen Stella
Susie Williams

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