

Saturday, December 5, 2015 7:30 p.m.
Christ United Methodist Church, Piscataway, New Jersey

WINTER SOLSTICE: Hear the Light!

Songs of renewal and rebirth

CANTABILE CHAMBER CHORALE

Rebecca Scott, Artistic Director and Conductor

Lynne Stallworth, *piano*

Julia Choi, *violin*

Hannah Ji, *viola*

Fumi Horike, *recorder*

Dennis Dell, *organ*

Sophia Cho, *violin*

Jennifer Choi, *cello*

Hanka Speldova, *recorder*

Guest Artists: Middletown HS South Chamber Choir

Emily Kaster, Director

PROGRAM

3rd Tune from 9 Psalm Tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter... Thomas Tallis

Shir Hama-a lot (Psalm 128)Salamone Rossi

Ecco Mormorar L'Onde.....Claudio Monteverdi

Schafe können sicher weiden..... J.S. Bach; arr: E. Harold Geer

Ave Verum Corpus (Motet K.V. 618).....W.A. Mozart

Ich liebe dich.....Ludwig van Beethoven; arr: Franz Biebl

Da stiegen die Menschen an's Licht.....Ludwig van Beethoven

Soprano solo: Gail Tilsner

O Schöne Nacht.....Johannes Brahms

Away in a Manger.....William J. Kirkpatrick; arr: Mack Wilberg

Recorders: Fumi Horike, Hana Speldova; Flute: Anita Gould

INTERMISSION

Three Hungarian Folk Songs.....Béla Bartók

In the Bleak Midwinter.....Harold Darke

Anthem (The dove descending breaks the air).....Igor Stravinsky
Emily Kaster, Elizabeth Verderosa, Gerry Spelrem, William Whitehead

Twelfth Night (Opus 42).....Samuel Barber

Antiphon: Kyrie Eleison.....Leonard Bernstein
Soprano solo: Sally Duke

Sing God a Simple SongLeonard Bernstein
Baritone solo: Adam Latham; Flute: Anita Gould

Down to the River to Pray.....arr: Mack Wilberg

**PLEASE JOIN US AFTER THE CONCERT
FOR A RECEPTION IN FELLOWSHIP HALL**

Kindly turn off cellphones, alerts, vibrating sounds during performance
Experience the concert but please do not preserve it—no video or audio recordings
***** Your applause is welcome at these places in the concert

WINTER SOLSTICE: Hear the Light!

PROGRAM NOTES by Rebecca Scott and Emily Kaster

Winter Solstice - A time of transition from light to dark, from warmth to cold. Tonight our music represents the changes that mankind has weathered over the centuries. The music that has helped us to renew our faith and has given us courage and enlightenment.

The composers that we present have been the most outstanding of their generation. They have given joy and encouragement in their time and beyond. Their names and their music are well known. It speaks to all humankind and is not forgotten. Although born in different times, different countries and to different societies, they have given light to the darkness and strength in times of difficulty and transition. All of these composers struggled with their own challenges, in their own time, but through their music, they have lead the way to understanding between people and societies.

We begin our program with [the](#) *Third Tune from Nine Psalm Tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter*, which was composed by **Thomas Tallis (1505-1581)**. Well known and well respected in England, Tallis was adept at writing for both the Catholic and Protestant liturgies during the difficult times of unstable monarchies changing the national faith from Catholic to Protestant to Catholic and back to Protestant again. While most composers like his friend William Byrd were writing in the Latin polyphonic style, Tallis was able to stay in favor by composing both Latin polyphony and in the English syllabic, homophonic style (one syllable for each note) that you hear tonight. He was also one of the first church composers to write anthems in English. The *Third Tune from Nine Psalm Tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter* published in 1567, uses Psalm 2:1 which relates King David complaining that his subjects and foreign neighbors do not appreciate that he is the king that God has ordained. By being able to successfully compose music during the period of conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, Tallis showed he was truly creative and capable of reflecting light on the tumultuous - and often dark - politics of Tudor England.

Later in the 16th century, **Salomone Rossi (1570-1630)**, an Italian-Jewish violinist and composer, was breaking tradition by creating music outside of liturgical pieces for the synagogue and composing Hebrew songs in non-Jewish styles. He is a transitional figure between the late Italian Renaissance period and the early Baroque and was extraordinary in that he was writing in forms that were not accepted in synagogue. In fact, he and his sister, an opera singer and possibly the first Jewish woman to be professionally engaged thus, had Christian friends. Rossi wrote in polyphonic style, a technique considered too fancy for the Jewish culture that was in constant flux. But living in the diverse culture of Mantua, Italy amongst educated and artistic people, he incorporated all he heard and saw in that environment into his music.

Shir Hama 'a lot (Psalm 128) is a short and simple three-part song in Hebrew with the vocal lines spinning up and down in parallel thirds and sixths between the sopranos and altos, while ending in frequent cadences which punctuate the meaning of the text. The bass line acts as a continuo part, stabilizing the modality. The text states it is a blessing on a man who lives a good life and it ends with a beautiful *Shalom* blessing to see Jerusalem throughout one's lifetime and to live long enough to see one's grandchildren as the three voices greet each other in imitative lines. Like Tallis, Rossi succeeded in a difficult balancing act as he was able to remain active in two conflicting worlds without having to compromise his artistic goals or his religious conviction.

Born later in the 16th century, **Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)** was also composing in Mantua, Italy among wealthy patrons and the busy artistic society. *Ecco Mormorar L'onde* is just one of his many madrigals, a common contrapuntal style of composition of the time meant for a small group of singers. Monteverdi mastered the technique of imitation and text painting, expressing the poetry beautifully. Here using five voices - two soprano parts, altos, tenors and basses-- he sets a poem by Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) one of the most widely read poets in Europe.

In appreciation of nature and the beauty of dawn, it sings of the light shining on all creation - water, branches, with birds singing their morning song. The voices run up and down the scales in imitation of each other expressing the rising sun, the branches quivering in the breeze and the water reflecting the motion of the light. All this can be heard in the moving lines. The last line tells the story of rebirth: the breeze “revives each burnt-out heart.”

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was the last and greatest of the Baroque composers. He composed over 300 cantatas, mostly sacred pieces for the church. *Schafe können sicher weiden* is the soprano aria from his secular Cantata 208, *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd*, (What please me is the lively hunt only) nicknamed *The Hunt*, which he composed for the birthday of Duke Christian of Sachsen-Weissenfels in 1713. The cantata was presented at a hunting lodge with Bach as the conductor, four singers and 14 instrumentalists, including a string quartet as we have for our concert. The aria has become most popular as arranged for four voices as we perform it tonight. The chorale sings the lovely chorale tune in harmony parts under the recorders with their high jumping melodies in parallel thirds. One can almost see the lambs frolicking about as the stable shepherd watches over the flock. Bach is revered for his mastery of the Baroque style.

The motet in D Major (K.618) *Ave verum corpus* was composed by **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** on June 17, 1791 less than six months before he died on December 5, 1791 at the age of thirty-five. The text of this motet is an anonymous 14th century Eucharistic hymn in Latin. It was written for his friend Anton Stoll, music coordinator in the Baden bei Wien, near Vienna to celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi. Marked *sotto voce* (in a quiet voice) at the beginning, the piece is a masterpiece of subtle word painting and harmonic expression. Only 46 measures in length, the choral lines rise and fall smoothly in arches of melody while creating exquisite harmonies expressing the text: “immolation and crucifixion. Cujus latus perforatum unda fluxit et sanguine” (whose pierced side flowed with water and blood). One hears in the descending chromatic vocal lines, the water and blood flowing down the body of Christ on the cross.

Ich liebe dich (I Love You) , or *Zärtliche Liebe* (Tender Love), WoO123, was written in 1795 when **Ludwig van Beethoven** was 25 years old and his works were becoming more popular and being noticed by powerful people. The lyrics are from a poem by Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Herrosee, a German pastor and writer. Our choral setting is by Franz Biebl (1906-2001), who arranged this solo lied (German art song) in parts. We perform it with a group of 12 singers and you can feel the intimacy you might experience when this famous song is sung at a wedding.

Beethoven was only 20 years old in 1790 when he was approached to compose a *Cantata on the Death of Joseph II*. This monarch was considered an “enlightened despot” whose reforms included abolishing serfdom, limiting the power of the Catholic church, and giving minority religions such as Protestants, Greek Orthodox, and Jews the ability to live and worship freely. For various reasons the cantata was not performed until 1884 when it received its premiere in Vienna. In our performance of *Da Stiegen die Menschen an’s Licht* (The people rose to the light), this soprano aria from the cantata is a telling of the rising of the people into light following Joseph crushing the monster, Fanaticism. The transition from Classical to Romantic periods is found in Beethoven’s music.

O schöne Nacht is the first of four quartets of Opus 92 composed in 1877 by **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**, and is the best known of his vocal quartets for accompanied mixed voices. Brahms chose this poem from Georg Friedrich Daumer’s collection of translated Hungarian folk poetry, *Polydora*. The poem describes how nightingale harmonies accompany the moonstruck youth to his beloved.

This song is one of Brahms’s most beautiful compositions. It gives each voice a solo and a harmonious part to the piano. A small masterpiece of the vocal repertoire, the text is expressed with sensitivity and masterful technique. Like Beethoven, Brahms was a transitional figure between the Classical and Romantic periods.

Away in a Manger is a Christmas carol first published in the late nineteenth century and used widely throughout the English-speaking world. We perform one of the most common musical settings by William J. Kirkpatrick (1895). Kirkpatrick was a Union soldier who composed many other hymns (although none are now as popular as this little lullaby). If the number of musical settings is any judge of popularity, *Away in a Manger* must be one of the most popular of all Christmas carols. Mack Wilberg, arranger and director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, has composed new melodies to complement *Away in a Manger*. These extend the song by creating lovely interludes for the wind instruments and a calm and quiet ending to a beautiful melody.

The second half of our program explores the range of styles that proliferated throughout the 20th century. We open with *Three Hungarian Folksongs*, collected by Béla Bartók (1881-1945), and translated and transcribed by Benjamin Suchoff. Bartók remains as one of Hungary’s greatest composers, and one of the most important composers of the 20th century. Through his collection and analytical study of folk music, he was one of the founders of comparative musicology, which later became ethnomusicology. In the second decade of the 20th century, Bartók teamed with Zoltán Kodály (composer, ethnomusicologist, and creator of the Kodály method) in the collection of old Magyar folk melodies, which coincided with a contemporary social interest in traditional national culture. They discovered that many of the traditional tunes were based on pentatonic scales, and these became an element that each incorporated into their own compositions. Bartók’s early compositions often blended late Romanticism elements, along with national folk tunes.

In the Bleak Mid-Winter is a Christmas carol based on a poem by the English poet, Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) written before 1872 in response to a request for a magazine at Christmas. Later appearing in

The English Hymnal with a setting by Gustav Holst, Harold Darke's (1874-1934) anthem setting has been lauded as one of the best Christmas carols by world leading choirmasters and choral experts. Darke's setting was written in 1909, while a student at the Royal College of Music, and is the version that has been favored by cathedral choirs, and is usually heard performed on the radio broadcasts of *Nine Lessons and Carols* by the King's College Choir. Darke served as conductor of the choir during World War II. The poem was popular amongst soldiers of the First World War, who found comfort and solace in the text.

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) is also considered one of the most important and influential composers of the 20th century, creating in diverse musical genres and consistently pushing the boundaries of musical design. His life spanned an arguably pivotal time in modern history; his early life began in Imperial Russia and ended in New York City, with stops in Switzerland, France, and later Hollywood, where he lived the longest. Stravinsky's musical output is typically divided into three general style periods: a Russian period, a neoclassical period, and a serial period. These three distinct periods not only carry in common Stravinsky's technical innovations related to rhythm and harmony, but his remarkable 'changing face,' always seems to retain a distinctive, essential identity. *Anthem (The Dove Descending Breaks the Air)*, was composed in 1962 during Stravinsky's serial period, at the request of Cambridge University Press, with T.S. Eliot's (1888-1965) suggestion to use his fourth installment of 'Little Gidding,' the last part of the *Four Quartets*. Stravinsky's use of serialism, a method that uses a series of values to manipulate different musical elements, underscores the uncertain message of the poem. No fixed tonality eases listeners' sense of expectation, which certainly works with lines like "Love is the unfamiliar name behind the hands that wove the intolerable shirt of flame." Throughout much of his life, Stravinsky was a devout member of the Russian Orthodox Church, and it has been suggested that his own interpretation of Eliot's text is that "love" represents God or Christ. Seen through a religious lens, the poem suggests that redemption from "fire" (sin) is found in death (pyre and fire). We hear a kind of musical cadence on the first verse, whose motive is carried to the ending cadence suggesting that we live either being consumed by "fire" of sin, or "fire" of death.

The bleak tonality of Stravinsky's piece is resonated in Samuel Barber's *Twelfth Night*, as our listeners are transitioned from the early to the latter half of the 20th century. A lauded American composer of orchestral, operatic, choral, and piano music, Barber (1910-1981) has earned a permanent place in concert repertory of orchestras with his *Adagio for Strings* (1936). A young prodigy, Barber attended the Curtis Institute, where he earned a reputation as a composer, pianist, and vocalist. Although the number of Barber's vocal compositions is vast, his choral output is modest in comparison. *Twelfth Night* begins with the line, "No night could be darker than this night," and the sometimes dissonant, longing music never looks back. Set to a poem by Laurie Lee (1914-1997), Barber represents the anguish and despair of the earth's reawakening from "utter death" and Christ's birth. Despite the warmth and promise of "the sun of heaven," and the "son of God," the piece ends with the same despairing text on which it began, that "no night could be darker than this night," although perhaps now infused with hope and optimism.

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) was an iconic figure of the 20th century art scene. He was known as an educator, conductor, composer of both classical and "popular" music, and a liberal political figure during the Vietnam War. Stories abound about his flamboyant and ebullient personal style.

This evening, we are performing two selections from *MASS*, a musical theatre work that Bernstein composed in 1971, commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy for the opening of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Originally composed to be a traditional mass, the piece took on a more innovative form, including both Latin and English texts. Intended to include upwards of 200 performers, *Mass* was a musical and theatrical experience. The two selections, *Antiphon: Kyrie Eleison* and *Sing God a Simple Song*, present a small sample of this larger, pageant-like work. *Kyrie Eleison* begins with a soprano soloist singing an unusual setting of the traditional Latin text, Lord have mercy. Exploring the heights and limits of her range, the singer continues when the choir of women join

on the text, *Christe eleison* (Christ have mercy), although the soprano solo continues, as though independent of the choir. Bernstein is exploring the notion of aleatoric music, in which an element of the composition is left up to chance and the determination of the performers. More broadly, Bernstein seems to be musically exploring a political notion – that practitioners of the same religious beliefs are not able to exist peacefully. This musical and human conflict seems to reach some sort of resolution in the next movement, *Sing God a Simple Song*, with the clear text and melody suggestion that hope and salvation is found in God.

The program ends with *Down to the River to Pray*, a traditional American song, variously described as a Christian folk hymn, an African-American spiritual, an Appalachian song, and a gospel song. Although the exact origin of the song is unknown, research suggests that it was composed by an African-American slave. Numerous versions of the text exist, with “to the river” often replacing an early version of “in the river.” Understanding it’s origination as a slave song, the text might serve as a coded message for escaping – traveling in water to avoid detection by dogs, using the “starry crown” to navigate the route, all while praying for God’s guidance to find the correct way. Mack Wilberg’s arrangement builds in voice and volume, creating towards the end the rolls and waves of the river itself, ending with climatic simplicity.

We invite you to listen to how these great composers, in times of great stress and transition, contributed to society by incorporating the feelings and thoughts of the people into their music, thus giving a beautiful expression to the thoughts and desires of mankind.

TEXTS and TRANSLATIONS

Hebrew text

PSALM 128

Shir hamma’a lot.

Ashre kol y’re adonai haholech,

Haholech bidrachav yagia

kapecha

ki tochel ashrecha v’tovlach

Esht’cha k’gefen poriya

b’yark’tai veite

Cha banecha kishitlei zeitim

saviv l’shulhanecha.

Hinnechi chen y’vorach gaver

y’re Adonai

Y’varech’cha Adonai mitsiyon

ur’ehb’tuv

Y’rushalayim kol y’mei hayecha.

Ur’eh vanim l’vanecha

Shalom al yisrael.

1 Happy are those who obey the LORD,
who live by his commands.

2 Your work will provide for your needs;
You will be happy and prosperous.

3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in your home,
and your children will be like young olive trees around
your table.

4 A man who obeys the LORD will surely be blessed
like this

5 May the LORD bless you from Zion!
May you see Jerusalem prosper all the days
of your life!

6 May you live to see your grandchildren!
Peace be with Israel!

Ecco mormorar l'onde
e tremolar le fronde
a l'aura mattutina e gli arboscelli,
e sovra i verdi rami i vaghi augelli
cantar soavemente
e rider l'oriente.
Ecco già l'alba appare
e si specchia nel mare
e rasserena il cielo
e [le campagne] imperla il dolce gelo,
e gli alti monti indora.
O bella e vaga Aurora,
L'aura è tua messaggera,
[e tu de l'aura
ch'ogni arso cor ristaura.

*Here are the waves murmuring
and the foliage quivering
at the morning breeze; and the shrubs,
and on the tree branches the pretty birds
sing softly;
and the Orient smiles.
Here dawn looms up
and is reflected in the sea
and brightens up the sky
and beads the sweet ice
and gilds the tall mountains.
O beautiful and vague dawn,
the gentle breeze is your herald
[and you [are the herald] of the breeze
which refreshes every burnt heart.*

Schafe können sicher weiden
wo ein guter Hirte wacht.

*Sheep will graze safely
Wherever a good shepherd guards
them.*

Wo Regenten wohl regieren,
kann man Ruh und Frieden spüren
und was Länder glücklich macht.

*Where rulers govern wisely
Peace, quiet, and happiness reign.*

Schafe können sicher weiden
wo ein guter Hirte wacht.

*Sheep will graze safely
Wherever a good shepherd guards
them.*

Ave, verum corpus natum
de Maria Virgine:
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine:
cuius latus perforatum
unda fluxit et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum,
in mortis examine.

*Hail the true body, born
of the Virgin Mary:
You who truly suffered and were
sacrificed
on the cross for the sake of man.
From whose pierced flank
flowed water and blood:
Be a foretaste for us
in the trial of death.*

Ich liebe dich (Zärtliche Liebe)

Ich liebe dich, so wie du mich,
Am Abend und am Morgen,
Noch war kein Tag, wo du und ich
Nicht teilten unsre Sorgen.

Auch waren sie für dich und mich
Geteilt leicht zu ertragen;
Du tröstetest im Kummer mich,
Ich weint' in deine Klagen.

Drum Gottes Segen über dir,
Du, meines Lebens Freude.
Gott schütze dich, erhalt dich mir,
Schütz und erhalt uns beide.

O Schöne Nacht

O schöne Nacht!

Am Himmel märchenhaft erglänzt
der Mond in seiner ganzen Pracht;
um ihn der kleinen Sterne liebliche
Genossenschaft,
liebliche Genossenschaft,

O schöne Nacht!

Es schimmert hell der Tau am grünen
Halm;
mit Macht im Fliederbusche schlägt
die Nachtigall;
Der Knabe schleicht zu seiner
Liebsten sacht ... sacht...sacht.

O schöne Nacht!

Da Stiegen die Menschen ans Licht

Da stiegen die Menschen ans Licht,
Da drehte sich glücklicher die Erd'
um die Sonne,
Und die Sonne wärmte mit Strahlen
der Gottheit.

I Love You (Tender Love)

*I love you so, as you love me,
In evenings and in mornings,
No day went by when you and I
Did not share our worries.*

*Such worries shared 'tween you and
me
Were easily borne together,
You comforted me in my distress,
While I wept with you in your sorrow.*

*May God thus bless you, Dear One,
Forever Joy of my Life.
May God protect and keep you safe,
May He protect us both in His
embrace.*

Oh Beautiful Night

Oh beautiful night!

*The moon in all its splendor
shines in the night sky like in a fairy
tale
Surrounded by small stars
in lovely companionship.*

Oh beautiful night!

*Dew glistens brightly on green blades
of grass,
The nightingale sings in the lilac bush
with all its might,
The lover sneaks off to his beloved
ever so softly,
ever so softly.*

Oh beautiful night!

*Thus Mankind reached the Light,
The Earth turned more happily
around the Sun,
And the Sun warmed the Earth with
divine rays.*

Twelfth Night

by Laurie Lee

No night could be darker than this night,
No cold so cold,
As the blood snaps like a wire,
And the heart's sap stills,
And the year seems defeated.
O never again, it seems, can green things run,
Or sky birds fly,
Or the grass exhale its humming breath
Powdered with pimpernels,
From this dark lung of winter.
Yet here are lessons for the final mile
Of pilgrim kings;
The mile still left when all have reached
Their tether's end: that mile
Where the Child lies hid
For see, beneath the hand, the earth already
Warms and glows;
For men with shepherd's eyes there are
Signs in the dark, the turning stars,
The lamb's returning time.
Out of this utter death he's born again,
His birth our saviour;
From terror's equinox he climbs and grows,
Drawing his finger's light across our blood –
The sun of heaven, and the son of god.

The Dove Descending breaks the air

by T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

“The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre-
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire.”

