

THE
DALE WARLAND
SINGERS

DECEMBER STILLNESS

Dale Warland, Conductor



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HERBERT HOWELLS (1892-1983)

▣ Long, long ago

(Publisher: Novello & Company, Limited)

Long, long ago,
Oh! so long ago
Christ was born in Bethlehem
To heal the world's woe.

His Mother in the stable
Watched him where he lay
And knew for all his frailty
He was the world's stay.

While he lay there sleeping
In the quiet night
She listened to his breathing
And oh! her heart was light.

She tended him and nursed him,
Giving him her breast,
And knew that it was God's son
In her crook'd arm, at rest.

Shepherds at the sheepfolds
Knew him for their King;
And gold and myrrh and frankincense
Three wise men did bring.

For He should be the Savior,
Making wars to cease,
Who gives joy to all men,
And brings to them peace.

— John Buxton

Herbert Howells once said "I am not a religious man." However, over a sixty-year career of teaching and "making people sing" he became England's most respected church composer. He taught at the Royal College of Music, London University, and at the famed St. Paul's Girls' School, succeeding Gustav Holst in 1936 as director of music. For these and other choirs he created dozens of motets and canticles. Because his inspiration wasn't necessarily from religious conviction, he looked to his friendships with individual musicians or the buildings in which they performed, most notably the vaulted and vaunted King's College Chapel in Cambridge. *Long, long ago* was written for the Lady Margaret Singers, also of Cambridge. The softly clashing dissonances and easily-unfolding melodies are Howells' signature compositional techniques.

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI (b. 1933)

▣ Izhe xeruvimy (Song of Cherubim) (1987)

(Publisher: B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz)

*Izhe xeruvimy tayno obrazuyuschyey,
i zhiivotvoryaschyey Troitse trisvyatuyu
pyesi' pripyevayuschyey, vsyakoye nynye
zhityeskoye otlozhim popyechenye,
yako da tsarya vsex podimymem
angelskimi nevidimo
dorinosima chinmi.
Alliluia, alliluia, alliluia.*

Let us the cherubim mystically representing,
and unto the life-giving Trinity
the thriceholy chant intoning,
now lay aside all earthly care:
That we may receive the King of all,
by the angelic hosts invisibly attended.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

During the '60s and '70s, many of Krzysztof Penderecki's U.S. premieres were championed by fellow Pole Stanislaw Skrowaczewski—then Music Director of the Minnesota Orchestra—and by Dale Warland—as conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra's Symphonic Chorus. Penderecki's trademarks are shattering blocks of sound set next to delicately shaded passages, avant-garde vocal and instrumental techniques, page after page of completely atonal music. His 1987 *Song of Cherubim*, however, is tonal and melodic, even occasionally glimmering with an old-fashioned major chord. The work was written as a 60th birthday tribute to "the dear Slava," cellist-conductor Mstislav Rostropovich, and perhaps that fact softened Penderecki's uncompromising musical language. This is not to say, though, that *Song of Cherubim* is a cake-walk, either for singer or listener. It delivers the same drama of Penderecki's earlier works with an impact that few late 20th-century composers can match.

ALF HOUKOM (b. 1935)

☐ The Rune of Hospitality (1984)

(Publisher: Walton Music Corporation)

Jeffrey Van, guitar

I saw a stranger yestere'en;
I put food in the eating place,
Drink in the drinking place,
Music in the listening place;
And in the sacred names of the Triune
He blessed me and my house,
My cattle and my dear ones.

And the lark said in her song:
Often, often, often,
Goes the Christ in the stranger's guise:
Often, often, often,
Goes the Christ in the stranger's guise.

— from the Gaelic

The Rune of Hospitality was born, unlike most new music today, without a commission or a grant. Iowa composer Alf Houkom was sitting in his easy chair, Christmas-time 1984, reading a book on old Scandinavian runes. Suddenly this rune, of Gaelic origin, "simply grabbed me," he says. "In my experience, Christianity has the capacity to be a closed-door faith. This text struck me with its openness, with the possibility for the Christ to come in any place. The music just unfolded, purposefully simple." The premiere was in 1985 at Iowa's Cornell College, where Houkom taught composition for several years until his retirement in the late '80s.

TROND KVERNO (b. 1945)

☐ Corpus Christi Carol

(Publisher: Walton Music Corporation)

Soloists: Patricia Thompson, soprano; Brian Newhouse, baritone

Male quartet: Jerome Elsbend, tenor I; Steve J. Sandberg, tenor II; Brian Newhouse, baritone; Thomas P. James, bass

Mixed quartet: Julie Ann Olson, soprano; Patricia Thompson, alto; Steve J. Sandberg, tenor; Brian Newhouse, baritone

Lully, lulley, lully, lulley, the falcon hath
borne my make away.

He bare him up, he bare him down, he
bare him into an orchard brown.
In that orchard there was a bed, it was
hangèd with gold so red.

And in that bed there lieth a knight, his
woundes bleeding both day and night.
And by that bedside there kneeleth a may,
and she weepeth both night and day.
And by that bedside there standeth a stone:
CORPUS CHRISTI written thereon.

— English medieval

Kverno graduated from the Oslo Conservatory in 1967 with an organ degree. His passion for ancient church music has filtered into his own compositions. In *Corpus Christi Carol* he set a medieval English text (which Britten also used in *A Ceremony of Carols*) filled with religious imagery—God as a falcon, the Virgin Mary as a maid, and Christ as a mortally wounded knight. Particularly touching is the repeated refrain, heard the first time as a gentle soprano solo, then harmonized with increasing passion.

ARVO PÄRT (b. 1935)

5 **Magnificat** (1989)

(Publisher: Universal Edition A.G., Vienna)

Soloists: Julie Ann Olson, Marie Spar Dymit, sopranos

*Magnificat anima mea Dominum: et
exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem
ancillae suae:
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes
generationes.
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est,
et sanctum nomen eius.
Et misericordia eius a progenie in
progenies timentibus eum.
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo;
dispersit superbos
mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede et
exaltavit humiles.
Esurientes implevit bonis:
et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum,
recordatus misericordiae suae.
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham
et semini eius in saecula.
Magnificat anima mea Dominum.*

My soul doth magnify the Lord: and
my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He hath regarded the lowliness of
His handmaiden:
for behold, from henceforth all
generations shall call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath magnified me,
and holy is His Name.
And His mercy is on them that fear Him
from generation to generation.
He hath shown strength with His arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the
imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their
seats and exalted those of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich He hath sent empty away.
He, remembering His mercy, hath helped
his servant Israel.
As He promised to our forefathers,
Abraham and his seed forever.
My soul doth magnify the Lord.

Arvo Pärt's 1989 setting of the *Magnificat* is a triumph of simplicity. It is little more than an F-minor chord inverted and re-inverted for eighty-one bars, only one of which does not contain the note C. Pärt says: "The complex and many-faceted only confuse me. I search for unity. How do I find my way to it? Traces appear in many guises. Everything that is unimportant falls away."

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943)

6 **Khvalitye imya Gospodnye** (Praise the Name of the Lord) (1915)

from *All Night Vigil*, Opus 37
(Publisher: Musica Russica, Inc.)

*Khvalitye imya Gospodnye. Alliluia.
Khvalitye, rabi Ghospoda. Alliluia,
alliluia.
Blagoslovyen Gohspod ot Siona,
zhiviy vo Iyerusalimye. Alliluia.
Ispovyedaytyesia Gohspodyevi,
yako blag.
Alliluia, alliluia.
Yako v vyek milost Yego. Alliluia.
Ispovyedaytyesia Bogu nyebyesnomu.
Alliluia, alliluia.
Yako v vyek milost Yego. Alliluia.*

Praise the name of the Lord. Alleluia.
Praise the Lord, O you His servants.
Alleluia, alleluia.
Blessed be the Lord from Zion,
He who dwells in Jerusalem. Alleluia.
O give thanks unto the Lord,
for He is good.
Alleluia, alleluia.
For His mercy endures forever. Alleluia.
O give thanks unto the God of Heaven.
Alleluia, alleluia.
For His mercy endures forever. Alleluia.

The usually prolific Rachmaninoff composed almost nothing between 1914–18. His homeland, Russia, was engulfed in World War I and torn by internal politics, the latter of which brought on 70 years of Communism. His only major score from that era, however, is considered one of his finest. *All-Night Vigil*, from January and February 1915, is a collection of 15 settings of predominantly Psalm and Gospel texts. Though it is now most often heard in the concert hall, *All-Night Vigil* was originally conceived exactly for what its title says—to accompany a night-long service in the Russian church. *Khvalitye imya Gospodnye* (*Praise the Name of the Lord*) is the eighth of these settings. The music is based on centuries-old Russian Orthodox chant, which Rachmaninoff dresses in the lush robes of Romantic harmony.

MARJORIE HESS (b. 1956)

☐ **The Oxen** (1993)

(Publisher: Walton Music Corporation)

Kathy Kienzle, harp

Christmas Eve, and twelve o'clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel,

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

— Thomas Hardy (1840-1927)

A mournful three-note motive for the altos opens Marjorie Hess' *The Oxen*. This wind-in-the-willows' sound would have pleased poet Thomas Hardy, who was forever haunted by themes of lost childhood and roads not taken. The alto motive is temporarily swept aside by the gathering voices and a whirling harp accompaniment, yet returns midway to cast a shadow across the score. Neither the poem nor the music offer easy Yuletide comforts: Hess' score ends practically with a question mark, as the basses go forth "in the gloom" hoping to find the old Christmas legend of the kneeling oxen to be true.

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)

☐ **Ave Maria** (1934)

(Publisher: Boosey & Hawkes)

*Bogoroditse Dievo, raduisia,
Blagodatnaia Maria, Gospod sToboiu.
Blagoslovenna Ty vjenach
i blagosoven plod tshreva Tvoiego
iako Spasa rodila iesi dusch naschich.*

Rejoice, o Virgin Theotokos,
Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb,
for you have borne the Savior of our souls.

Igor Stravinsky is perhaps the Russian Orthodox Church's most famous prodigal son. He abandoned the Church while still a young man, and found glittering acclaim in pre-World War I Paris with his ballets *The Firebird*, *Petrouchka*, and *The Rite of Spring*. After a profound spiritual crisis in the mid-1920's, he rediscovered his faith and returned to the Church, thereafter creating some of the most powerful religious music of the century, including *Symphony of Psalms* (1930).

Set against the thunderous color of *The Firebird* or the sheer force of *Symphony of Psalms*, his motet *Ave Maria* barely registers. It is built of only three phrases; none of the voice parts has more than six notes; it is over in barely two and a half minutes. Indeed, if a piece of music can be so, *Ave Maria* is almost still. Yet it reveals an aspect of the man that is often lost in his celebrity—the quiet core of his spirituality.

JAVIER BUSTO (b. 1949)

▣ **Ave Maria** (1980)

(Publisher: AB Carl Gehrman's Musikförlag, Stockholm)

*Ave Maria gratia plena
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus.
Sancta Maria, mater dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus nunc et in
hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.*

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women, and
blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, mother of God,
pray for us sinners now and in the
hour of our death.
Amen.

The small type in the upper left hand corner of Javier Busto's personal stationery says "Medico"; "Director de Coro." Busto is one of a surprisingly large but little-known number of medical doctors who also have thriving careers as musicians, most often as conductors. Busto is a native of Spain who divides his time there today between his patients and the choir he founded in 1978, Eskifaia. As a composer, he writes in a variety of styles—often favoring quick musical juxtapositions of exuberant passages next to gentle ones, and traditional four-part harmony next to avant-garde "sliding" pitches. His 1980 *Ave Maria* is lovingly straightforward. The harmonies are conventional, made lush with the intervals of seconds and sevenths; the melodies are as prayerful and lovely to sing as they are to hear.

FRANCIS POULENC (1899-1963)

▣ **Quem vidistis pastores dicite** (1951)

From: *Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël (Four Motets for Christmastime)*
(Publisher: Editions Salabert)

*Quem vidistis pastores dicite:
annuntiate nobis in terris quis
apparuit.
Natum vidimus, et choros Angelorum
collaudantes Dominum.
Dicite quidnam vidistis, et annuntiate
Christi Nativitatem.*

Shepherds, whom did you see:
Speak, tell us, who has appeared on
the earth:
We saw a new-born child, and choirs of
angels giving praise to God.
Tell what you have seen, and announce
Christ's nativity.

The central event in Francis Poulenc's life was the visit he made to the chapel of Notre Dame de Rocamadour in southern France. It was 1935, shortly after the accidental death of a dear friend. In the chapel's echoing halls Poulenc rediscovered the Catholic faith of his childhood, one he had abandoned for Parisian café and night life. He turned to creating inspired scores for the church, some of them large choral and orchestral works, others brief *a cappella* scores like *Quem vidistis pastores dicite*. This is the second of four motets composed around Christmas 1951, telling the story of the Annunciation to the shepherds.

STEPHEN PAULUS (b. 1949)

▣ **Evensong** (1990)

(Publisher: European American Music Corp.)

Solo trio: Julie Ann Olson, soprano I; Janice Hunton, soprano II; Anna Mooy, alto

See how the moon has risen
among the stars that glisten
high in the firmament.
Dark stand the woods and silent
while from the meadows' island
white veils of ghostly mists ascend.

Now has the world grown silent
while in the evening's twilight
we find protective peace,
as in our quiet chamber
after much toil and labor
in healing sleep we find release.

Look how the half moon shineth
while from our view it hideth
its fullness, round and whole.
Thus many truths are hiding
from utter lack of striving
on our part to see them whole.

The hour draws near for sleeping
and rest, and in God's keeping
entrust we body and soul.
Protect us, Lord, from danger,
keep watch o'er barn and manger—
and make our ailing neighbor whole.

— Matthias Claudius (1740-1815),
translated from the German by
Albert Ernest Flemming

Stephen Paulus has served as composer-in-residence for the Minnesota Orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and the Dale Warland Singers. He makes his home in St. Paul, Minnesota. Of *Evensong* he writes:

"In 1988, I collaborated with translator Albert Flemming on a large choral and orchestral work, *Voices*, premiered by the Dale Warland Symphonic Chorus and Minnesota Orchestra. Shortly after, Albert sent me a gift of a translation he'd made. It was of 'Evensong', a beautiful but little-known early 19th-century German poem by Matthias Claudius. I was delighted and decided to take advantage of the gift by setting it to music—hoping that its wider recognition in a choral work would be, in a sense, a gift back to Albert."

STEVEN HEITZEG (b. 1959)

▣ **little tree** (1990)

(Publisher: Walton Music Corporation)

Kathy Kienzle, harp

little tree
little silent Christmas tree
you are so little
you are more like a flower

who found you in the green forest
and were you very sorry to come away?
see i will comfort you
because you smell so sweetly

i will kiss your cool bark
and hug you safe and tight
just as your mother would,
only don't be afraid

look the spangles
that sleep all the year in a dark box
dreaming of being taken out and
allowed to shine,
the balls the chains red and gold the
fluffy threads,

put up your little arms
and i'll give them all to you to hold
every finger shall have its ring
and there won't be a single place dark
or unhappy

then when you're quite dressed
you'll stand in the window for everyone
to see
and how they'll stare!
oh but you'll be very proud

and my little sister and i will take hands
and looking up at our beautiful tree
we'll dance and sing
"Noel Noel"

— e.e. cummings (1894-1962)

The child-narrator of Cummings's poem lovingly addresses this tree as if it were another child. Such respect given to all creatures is at the center of Steven Heitzeg's artistic ethic. Born and raised on a southern Minnesota dairy farm, Heitzeg dedicates himself to the illumination of nature's many voices; in his orchestral scores he incorporates horse bones and agates, birch bark and soil to "celebrate the beautiful in all things." Nothing so exotic in *little tree*—just a beguiling melody that, like the poem, seems to come straight from a child's heart.

THE
DALE WARLAND
SINGERS

Dale Warland, Conductor

SOPRANOS:

Marie Spar Dymit
Wendi Gerth
Mary Heston
Janice Hunton
Julie Ann Olson
Melissa O'Neill
Deborah Loon Osgood
Elizabeth Pauly
Teresa Tierney
Ruth Thompson

TENORS:

Paul J. Anderson
Jerome Elsbernd
David Fischer
Bryan Fisher
Thomas Larson
Robert Pontious
Steve J. Sandberg
Randall Speer
Steven Staruch

ALTOS:

Carrie Benson
Cyndee Chaffee
Joanne Halvorsen
Lynette R. Johnson
Shelley Kline
Anna Mooy
Patricia Thompson
Mitzi Westra
Teresa K. Whaley
Karen Wilkerson

BASSES:

Bruce Broquist
Thomas P. James
Paul Johnson
Arthur LaRue
David Ryan Moberg
Brian Newhouse
Robert Peskin
James Ramlet
Brad Runyan
Brian Steele

The Dale Warland Singers is a forty-voice professional chorus founded in 1972 and based in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. Devoted to the commissioning and performance of twentieth-century music, the ensemble has won the ASCAP Award for Adventuresome Programming in 1992 and 1993, as well as the 1992 Margaret Hillis Achievement Award for Choral Excellence. In 1990 the Dale Warland Singers was selected to be the sole North American representative at the International Symposium on Choral Music in Helsinki and Stockholm. This is the ensemble's twenty-first recording.

