

Program Notes

Gloria

Composer, arranger, conductor and performer Randol Alan Bass has achieved an impressive array of performances and commissions by prestigious orchestras and choruses throughout the U.S. and Europe, including the Chicago Symphony, the Tanglewood Chorus, The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Houston Symphony, the Boston Pops Orchestra and the Dallas Symphony and Chorus. *Gloria* was written for the New York Pops Orchestra in 1990. It is a rhythmic, yet lyrical, setting of the liturgical Latin text. It was recorded by the Boston Pops Orchestra, Keith Lockhart conducting, on their 1999 CD release *Holiday Pops*.

Good Christian Men, Rejoice

The tune "In dulci jubilo" dates from 14th century Germany. The English translation, "Good Christian Men Rejoice" was written by J.M. Neale some 500 years later. John Rutter's bright arrangement alternates accompaniment of flowing triplets with a cappella choral passages and single line melodies with four-part harmonies to great effect in this well-known Christmas carol.

Judea (A Virgin Unspotted)

William Billings, ancestor of our accompanist David Billings, was the best known American composer and musician of the eighteenth century, sometimes called the father of American choral music. A native Bostonian, Billings wrote more than three hundred compositions, almost all of them settings of sacred texts, and almost all of them in four parts for a cappella singing. He was active as a singing-school master for over thirty years in Boston, and the first American composer to publish a book entirely of his own compositions. In his setting of "A Virgin Unspotted," first published in 1778, Billings gives the melody to the tenors. Each verse is followed by a chorus set as a sprightly 6/8 dance.

There shall a star from Jacob shine forth

In the last year of his life, Mendelssohn began an oratorio on the life of Christ. Given the title *Christus* by the composer's brother, "There shall a star from Jacob shine forth" is the best known movement from this unfinished work. Audience members who heard the Pittsburgh Concert Chorale perform Mendelssohn's monumental oratorio *Elijah* last March might recognize his unmistakable style in this chorus, which bears many similarities, both melodically and harmonically, to some of the choruses in *Elijah*.

Still, Still, Still

"Still, still, still" is an Austrian Christmas carol and lullaby. The melody is a folk tune from the State of Salzburg. The tune appeared for the first time in 1865 in a folksong collection of Maria Vinzenz Süß, founder of the Salzburg Museum. The words, which run to six verses in German, describe the peace of the infant Jesus and his mother as the baby is sung to sleep. They have changed slightly over the years but the modern Standard German version remains attributed to Georg Götsch. There are various English translations, and the version we will sing was translated from the German by John Rutter. The chorus provides an angelic background to the soloist in the first two verses, then sings verse three in this tranquil arrangement, beautiful for its simplicity.

Ave Maria

César Alejandro Carrillo is a conductor and composer living in Caracas, Venezuela. He composed "Ave Maria" for four-part women's chorus in 1999. The work is characterized by chords that shimmer with added 7^{ths}, 9^{ths}, and 11^{ths}. At the text "Sancta Maria," phrases are repeated, sometimes as echoes, sometimes with increasing intensity, until the final "amen" fades quietly away.

O Tannenbaum

The tune that we typically associate with “O Christmas Tree” is actually a German folksong that has nothing to do with Christmas. The modern lyrics were written in 1824. A Tannenbaum is a fir tree and the words of the song refer to its evergreen nature as a symbol of constancy and faithfulness. The arrangement we will sing was written by legendary choral conductor Gregg Smith, whose 16-member professional chorus, the Gregg Smith Singers, set the standard for performing contemporary music during the latter half of the 20th century.

Unclouded Day

“Unclouded Day” is an eight-part a cappella setting of the treasured gospel tune by J.K. Alwood. A straight-forward first verse and chorus are followed by two verses in which traditional bluegrass vocal stylings combine with counterpoint and fugue in a crescendo of excitement that peaks in a roof-raising eight-part chord on the phrase “in the city that is made of gold.”

~ Shawn Kirchner

O Come, All Ye Faithful

This well-known Christmas carol was originally written in Latin as “Adeste Fidelis.” The writers of both the lyrics and the tune are unknown, but the carol is believed to have first appeared in the seventeenth century. Please join the PCC in singing this favorite Christmas carol.

Angels We Have Heard on High

“Angels We Have Heard on High” is a beloved Christmas carol of French origin. The arrangement the PCC will sing in this concert was created by Mack Wilberg, conductor of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Wilberg uses different voice combinations – women, men, and full chorus – bring the work to a climactic end to close the first half of the concert.

"It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" is a popular Christmas song written in 1963 by Edward Pola and George Wyle. It was recorded and released that year by pop singer Andy Williams for his first Christmas album, *The Andy Williams Christmas Album*. In the issue of *Billboard* magazine dated November 28, 2009, the list of the "Top 10 Holiday Songs (Since 2001)" places the Williams recording of "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" at No. 5. It's one of our favorites!

We Need a Little Christmas

“We Need a Little Christmas” was first performed by Angela Lansbury in the title role of Jerry Herman's 1966 Broadway musical, *Mame*. One of the original lines of the song was “But, Auntie Mame, it's one week past Thanksgiving Day now!” It's difficult to believe that there was ever a day when people waited that long to “haul out the holly!”

Jingle Bell Rock

Popular holiday songs "Jingle Bell Rock" was written by two men who made their living in arenas other than music. Joseph Carleton Beal was a Massachusetts-born public relations professional and longtime resident of South Ocean Avenue in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and James Ross Boothe was an American writer in the advertising business. The song was first released by Bobby Helms in 1957 and has received frequent airplay in the United States during every Christmas season since then.

Mele Kalikimaka

Hawaiian for “Merry Christmas,” the song "Mele Kalikimaka" was written in 1949 by Robert Alex Anderson. Bing Crosby and The Andrews Sisters recorded it in 1950 and Bette Midler sang it on her album *Cool Yule*. The song was featured prominently in the movie *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.

Deck the Halls (in 7/8)

"Deck the Hall" is a traditional Welsh carol. The melody dates back to the sixteenth century, while the English lyrics first appeared in 1862. Arranger James McKelvy gives his a cappella setting a unique twist by putting the carol in a 7/8 time signature instead of its traditional 4/4.

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

The early history of this popular English carol is largely unknown. In 1935, Oxford University Press published a four-part choral arrangement by Arthur Warrell under the title "A Merry Christmas," describing the piece as a "West Country Traditional Song." Warrell's arrangement is notable for using "I" instead of "we" in the lyrics. (The first line is "I wish you a Merry Christmas.") It was republished in 1961 in the collection *Carols for Choirs* and remains widely performed. We will perform English composer John Rutter's lively arrangement of the carol.

Candlelight Carol

In the words of composer John Rutter, "With music, Christmas can be absolutely perfect." Indeed, Rutter has nearly achieved perfection with "Candlelight Carol." In 1985 he wrote both the music and the words for this gentle, luminous piece celebrating Mary and the birth of Jesus.

Silent Night

In 1818 in Oberndorf a small village in Austria, the organ at St. Nicholas parish church stopped working just before Christmas Eve. The young priest, Father Joseph Mohr, who had come to Oberndorf the year before, gave some lyrics he had written to organist Franz Xaver Gruber and asked him to compose a melody and guitar accompaniment for the church service. Gruber and Mohr both performed the carol during the mass on the night of December 24. It has become one of the most beloved of all Christmas carols, "Silent Night."

Joy to the World

The hymn "Joy to the World" was first published in 1719 in Isaac Watts' collection *The Psalms of David: Imitated in the language of the New Testament, and applied to the Christian state and worship*. It is Watts' paraphrase of the second portion of Psalm 98. The words were set to a melody believed to have been composed by George Frideric Handel, although Handel did not write the entire tune. Please join in singing this beloved carol with the PCC.

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!

The lyrics to this familiar carol were written in 1739 by Charles Wesley, brother of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church. Wesley requested that his words be sung to a somber tune, and originally they were. One hundred years later, Felix Mendelssohn set the words to a new melody. It is this version of "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!" that we know today. This setting by Robert Hunter features the PCC and organist David Billings in a triumphant finale that captures the wonder and majesty of this glorious season.