

**Dr. J. Harry Persse  
1923-1988**

Harry Persse was born and raised in Savannah. He attended Sacred Heart Parochial School and Benedictine Military School. In 1941 He entered Catholic University as an Engineering major however war service intervened. After seeing action in the Pacific he resumed his education at the University of Georgia and engineering's loss was music's gain. He received his bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from UGA and later received his masters in 1951 and his PhD in 1965 in composition, both from Florida State University.

Upon his return to Savannah he joined the faculty at Armstrong State College where he served in varying capacities until his death in 1988. He directed the choirs, served as head of student activities, and for many years was the head of the Fine Arts Department.

He also served his home parish church, Sacred Heart. Raised and married in that church, he was its music director for many years. He also undertook the never-ending task of keeping the organ in working order. It is with good reason that after his death the Sacred Heart choir took the name of the J. Harry Persse Memorial Choir.

Throughout his life he was also an active composer. Although he composed a number of very complex instrumental and choral/orchestral works, he was best known and beloved for the many lovely compositions which were written for the specific choirs he conducted. His music was always beautiful, well crafted, and within the capabilities of singers who were, for the most part, highly motivated amateurs. He had a knack for getting the most out of his choirs and for writing music which showed them in the best light.

It is with great pleasure that I Cantori presents a number of compositions by Savannah's own J. Harry Persse. We are genuinely proud to announce that several of these lovely Christmas pieces have been accepted for publication and will appear in the *I Cantori Series*, published by National Music Publishers.



**Robert L. Harris, conductor  
Edie Hockspeier, organ**

# ***13<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Concert***

**St. Paul's Evangelical  
Lutheran Church**

**December 15, 2003**

## program

### Hodie Christus Natus Est

J. Harry Persse

*Today Christ was born: today the Saviour appeared;  
Today on earth the angels sing, the Archangels rejoice;  
Today the just exult, saying; Glory to God in the highest,  
Alleluia!*

### Resonet in Laudibus

Jacob Handl

*Let Zion resound in praises with the joyful acclaim of the faithful:  
He whom Mary bore has appeared. The prophesies of Gabriel are  
fulfilled. O joy, O joy! The Virgin has given birth to God that  
which divine mercy willed. Today a king has appeared in Israel,  
born of the Virgin Mary.*

### O Magnum Mysterium

Thomas Luis de Victoria

### O Magnum Mysterium (premier performance)

Kevin Hampton

*O great mystery, and wondrous sacrament, that animals  
Should see the new-born Lord lying in their manger! Blessed  
Is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear the Lord Jesus  
Christ. Alleluia!*

### Shepherds Loud Their Praises Singing

J. Harry Persse

### Es ist ein Ros entsprungen

Michael Praetorius

### Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Jon Washburn

### Lo, How a Rose

J. Harry Persse

### Nova! Nova!

Bob Chilcott

### Ave Maria (1947)

J. Harry Persse

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,  
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 at the hour of our death. Amen.*

### Virgin Great and Glorious

Leo Nestor

Edie Hockspeier, organ

### Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day

arr. J. Harry Persse

### How Far Is It To Bethlehem

arr. James McCullough

### Huron Carol (premier performance)

arr. Nathaniel Roper

Rachel Finley, soprano

### Pastores a Belén

arr. J. Harry Persse

*The shepherds go happily to see the Virgin Mary. Jesus waits  
for us there. Shepherds come in, shepherdess too. Let us go  
see the newborn, let us go see the baby Manuel.*

### Patapan

arr. Kirke Mechem

### Fum! Fum! Fum

## personnel

### soprano

Peggy Breese

Rachel Finley

Mari Harris

Mary Catherine Huston

Catherine Rogers

Suzanne C. Wages

### alto

Donna C. Berry

Neva Bottcher

Edie Heckspeier

Carla McCurry

Denise Norman

Elizabeth van Beest

### tenor

Tag Bridges

Randall Canady

Raymond R. Ellis, jr.

Tim Wheelles

Billy Wooten

### bass

Vonté Abrams

Dan Bolta

Gene L. Jarvis

Gregory Martin

James Worrell

## intermission