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presents

I Cantori
Dr. Robert L. Harris, conductor

400 Years of Music for Holy Week

Lutheran Church of the
Ascension
Savannah, Georgia

March 22, 2005

program

The Entrance into Jerusalem
Hosanna to the Son of David!

Orlando Gibbons
(1585-1625)

Driving the Money Changers from the Temple
Jesus and the Traders

Zoltán Kodály
(1882-1967)

The Last Supper

Let Us Break Bread Together

arr. William Hall

Praying in the Garden

Tristis est anima mea
Mary Catherine Mousourakis, soprano

Francis Poulenc
(1899-1963)

Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem:

Sad is my soul and sorrowful, even unto death;

Sustinete hic, et vigilate mecum:

Tarry with me here, stay and watch with me awhile;

Nunc videbitis turbam, quae circumdabit me.

Now you see the multitude, come to lay hold on me.

Vos fugam capietis, et ego vadam immolari pro vobis.

I go forth to die, suffer and die, die for you.

Ecce appropinquat hora et Filius hominis tradetur

When the Son of Man needs must be betrayed

In manus peccatorum.

into the hands of evil men.

Good Friday

Were You There?
I Think I heard Him Say
Raymond R. Ellis, jr., piano

arr. Norman Luboff
arr. Martin/Pugh

Reflection

Ehre sei dir, Christe

*Ehre sei dir, Christe,
Der du littest Not,
An dem Stamm des Kreuzes,
Für uns den bittern Tod,
Und herrschest mit dem Vater
Dort in Ewigkeit,
Hilf uns armen Sundern,
Zu der Seligkeit.
Kyrie eleison.*

God So Loved the World

Heinrich Schütz
(1585-1672)

Thine be the glory, O Christ
Thou in deepest woe
Did suffer on the cross
for us this bitter death.
and reignest with the Father
in eternity.
Help us fainting sinners,
To our heavenly rest.
Lord have mercy.

John Stainer
(1840-1901)

Resurrection

Arise and Hail the Sacred Day
The Lord Is Risen Indeed

William Billings
(1746-1800)

Amen

Billy Wooten, tenor

Jester Hairston

Alleluia

Zdeněk Lukáš
(1928-)

Reflection

Agnus Dei (Requiem)

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,

Dona eis requiem sempiternam

Grant them eternal rest everlasting

Te decet hymnus Deus

A hymn befits thee, O God,

et tibi redetur votum in Jerusalem:

and to Thee a vow shall be fulfilled in Jerusalem.

Te decet hymnus, Domine, quia pius es

A hymn befits Thee, O God, for thou art merciful.

Zdeněk Lukáš

Orlando Gibbons (1585-1625) was one of the foremost English composers of the late Renaissance. Better known as a keyboard performer than as a composer he served the Chapel Royal at Westminster. The majority of his compositions were sacred services and anthems however his best known work is probably the lovely secular madrigal *The Silver Swan*.

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) was one of the most remarkable musicians of the 20th century. His diverse career included extensive pioneer work in music education; his method for teaching music to young students is still in use. He was also a pioneer ethnomusicologist. A student and disciple of Béla Bartók he participated in the collection and cataloguing of the musical heritage of his Hungarian homeland. In addition to these careers, he was a significant composer. His orchestral and works are heard more frequently than his vocal music, no doubt because of the difficulty which the Hungarian language presents to non-native speakers. The exciting anthem *Jesus and the Traders* is presented here in English translation.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) was a member of the group of six French composers who dominated the musical scene in the first part of the 20th century. His vocal and choral compositions are favorites among solo singers and choral conductors. His *Gloria* and the *Mass in G* are frequently performed. There is a certain touch of humor which permeates much of his shorter choral compositions, many of which are based on folk material. The *Four Advent Motets*, and the *Four Lenten Motets* are more serious in nature. *Tristis est anima mea* comes from the Lenten set and makes telling use of dissonance to portray the graphic nature of the text.

Norman Luboff was a leading figure in American choral music. His recordings of folk songs were inspirational treasures for a generation of choral musicians. His arrangements and original compositions were and are widely performed. His publishing company, Walton Music, was responsible for making available a wide variety of music including Luboff's own arrangements, and a significant quantity of Scandinavian choral masterpieces.

Heinrich Schutz (1585-1672) was one of the giants of the 17th century, and one of the first in the long line of great composers who served the Lutheran Church. There are few composers from any time period whose music provides more variety of style. After studying with Giovanni Gabrielli in Venice he returned to Germany where he spent the majority of his career in Dresden. His career and his music were directly affected by the 30 Year's War. In good times his music was dramatic and splendid, using instrumental forces and many voices. Other works were in the modern, up to date Baroque style, employing basso continuo and solo voices.

In more austere times he adapted to a more spare style, often composing in a style reminiscent of the Renaissance. *Ehre sei dir, Christe* concludes his *St. Matthew Passion*.

John Stainer (1840-1901) was one of the leading figures in English church music during the last half of the 19th century. Today he is remembered for a number of church anthems which have remained in the repertoire, but he is best known for the wonderful, expressive anthem, *God So Loved the World*.

William Billings (1746-1800) was a Bostonian, and a committed revolutionary. Among his early compositions are a number of stirring anthems written to commemorate the major engagements of the Revolutionary War, the best known being *Chester*. After the war he devoted himself to church compositions and is considered the first significant American composer. There is a certain characteristic rough-hewn quality to much of his music. There are many short phrases, strong rhythms, open harmonies and parallel fifths. He makes frequent use of imitative counterpoint and even canon. He was a personal friend of Paul Revere who actually engraved the plates of his first book of music.

Jester Hairston was one of the great treasures of American music. A pioneer arranger of African-American Spirituals, it was his charisma and musical charm which made him one of the leading inspirational choral clinicians for generations of young singers (your conductor among them) He was sent by the State Department on several trips abroad including one of the first to the Soviet Union to represent the best that American culture had to offer.

Many know him for his show-business credits. A member of the musical cast of the pioneering film "Green Pastures," he was involved as the assistant conductor of "The Voices of Walter Schuman," an early television professional choral ensemble. He appeared in the "Amos and Andy" television show as well as "Amen" and many other television appearances. Those who remember Sidney Poitier singing *Amen* in the film "Lilies of the Field" actually remember the distinctive voice of Jester Hairston.

Zdeněk Lukáš is one of the leading composers of the Czech Republic. Although he was born in 1928 it has only been recently that his music has become widely known in his homeland and around the world. The Communist government which controlled music printing did not look with favor on the frequent use of patriotic folk music and such subject matter as a powerful work entitled *Great Is the Power of Truth*. After the fall of the Iron Curtain he began to receive more performances. On New Year's Day of the new millennium his *Seventh Symphony* was premiered, coupled on the program with the Beethoven *Ninth Symphony*.

Lukáš has visited Savannah on two occasions to attend the premier performances of new compositions which he has written for I Cantori. The Alleluia was composed on the return flight to Prague after his participation in the group's tenth anniversary celebration. I Cantori also gave the American premier of the *Lukáš Requiem*.

I CANTORI PERSONNEL

Donna Berry
Dan Bolta
Peggy Breese
Randy Canady
Kevin Cartee
Jan Curtis
Ray Ellis
Rachel Finley
Nancy W. Gates
Mari Harris
Edie Hockspeier
Gene Jarvis
Matthew Kanneberg
Karin Kovacs
Greg Martin
Carla McCurry
Mary Catherine Mousourakis
Denise Norman
Amanda Phillips
Catherine Rogers
Ted Seamen
Jack van Eck
Angela Wilson
Billy Wooten
Jim Worrell

History: I Cantori - Savannah, Georgia

I Cantori, Savannah's professional vocal chamber ensemble, was founded in 1991 by its current conductor, Dr Robert L. Harris. The group, which consists of 24 auditioned singers, has devoted itself to the performance of quality choral literature, and has specialized in seeking out unusual repertoire. They have presented Renaissance Christmas programs, a concert of music by Spanish composers, concerts of music by American composers, and two programs made up entirely of music by women composers.

Because of a concern about the questionable quality of a great deal of the new choral music being published today, *I Cantori* has made a strong commitment to bringing newly composed choral music of high quality to the repertoire. To that end *I Cantori* has embarked upon an active program of commissioning new compositions by leading choral composers and making it available to the choral community through the I Cantori Series of choral music published by National Music Publishers.

The Requiem setting by the leading Czech composer Zdeněk Lukáš was given its American premiere in 1993. In 1995 the group premiered Four Fragments from John Donne by Daniel Pinkham, and in 1996 commissioned Williametta Spencer's And the White Rose Is A Dove.

I Cantori has also premiered new choral compositions by the Czech-American composer Vaclav Nelhybel, Peter Schickele, Vera Kistler, Eugene Butler, Randall Reese, Robert Young and James Mulholland, and Vijay Singh. Next season, our 15th, will feature several new works commissioned for the anniversary celebration.

Dr. Harris has also edited a number of works from the Italian Baroque which have received their first modern performance by *I Cantori*. Among the composers who have received long awaited premiers are Alessandro Scarlatti, Nicola Porpora and Francesco Durante. These works also appear in the I Cantori Series which now has more than 45 works in the catalogue.