

PROGRAM NOTES

North Shore Choral Society welcomes you to Ring in the Holidays! We are excited to welcome back Andrea Handley and the Chicago Bronze English Handbell Ensemble to help us ring in the holidays with our first concert of the 2019/2020 season. We have a wide variety of repertoire for you today including a lush interpretation of Ave Maria by R. Nathaniel Dett conducted by Apprentice Conductor Tierra Whetstone and a world premiere arranged by Andrea Handley. We hope you enjoy this glorious music in the beautiful space of First Presbyterian Church!

Come, Ye Thankful People, Come (*St. George's Windsor*) is a favorite Thanksgiving hymn. The text moves from words of gratitude for earthly harvest to a longing for our "final harvest home." This arrangement, by Joel Raney, a Chicago-based composer/arranger, features a bright and rhythmic handbell and organ opening with a closing choral introit based on the first verse of the hymn.

Julia Davids

Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918) studied at Eton and at Oxford and began publishing songs, church music and piano music in the 1860's. He taught at the Royal College of Music from 1863 (succeeding Sir George Grove as its director in 1894) and was professor at Oxford from 1900 to 1908. Parry's setting of **I Was Glad** is a large-scale and grand work employing full choir and brass ensemble (today, with organ). It was written in 1902 and has been performed at all of the coronations since then, being sung at the arrival of the monarch.

© *Fine Arts Brass Ensemble*

Canadian native, R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943), is one of the greatest black musicians known today. Dett was a composer, writer, poet,

teacher, pianist, and organist. He was mostly known for his soloistic piano works. He only composed a few choral pieces in motet form; **Ave Maria** is among the most beautiful arrangements to be heard. "Suddenly it seemed I heard again the frail voice of my long departed grandmother calling across the years; and in a rush of emotion which stirred my spirit to its very center, the meaning of the songs which had given her soul such peace was revealed to me." (R. N. Dett)

Tierra Whetstone

Healey Willan (1880-1968) was a Canadian composer and organist who served a number of high profile churches in Toronto during his lifetime. Best known for his sacred organ and choral pieces, he composed over 800 works and was named a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1967. **Sing to the Lord of Harvest** is a straight forward setting of the Thanksgiving text by J.S.B. Monsell, featuring largely homophonic writing for the choir and an exuberant organ accompaniment.

Julia Davids

Rondo Passacaglia, written by well-known handbell composer Cynthia Dobrinski, combines two compositional forms – the rondo, and the passacaglia. The rondo form features a principal and repeating theme, alternated with contrasting episodes. The passacaglia form is reflected in the repeated bass line throughout the entire piece.

Andrea Handley

Autumn Leaves was made famous by singer Nat King Cole, with lyrics by Johnny Mercer: "The falling leaves drift by the window, the autumn leaves of red and gold ... Since you went away the days grow long and soon I'll hear old winter's song. But I miss you most of all, my darling when autumn leaves start to fall."

Andrea Handley

Praise the Lord with Drums and Cymbals was written by Sigfrid-Karg Elert, a German composer, in 1909. Originally written for harmonium, and later for organ, it references Psalm 150:5: "*Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*" It's an exciting fast-paced piece with antiphonal sections that offer dynamic variety. It was recently arranged for handbells by Andrea Handley and published by the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers, Inc.

Andrea Handley

Randol Alan Bass is an American composer and arranger who resides in Austin, Texas. With hundreds of compositions and arrangements to his credit, he continues to compose for a variety of mediums including chorus, orchestra, and wind ensemble. **Gloria** is one of his most famous works and was premiered in 1990 at Carnegie Hall by the New York Pops Orchestra and the Boston Pops Orchestra. It utilizes exciting rhythmic motives and lyrical melodic material to create a challenging and moving setting of the Latin text. The North Shore Choral Society will perform this work with the Evanston Symphony at their concert on December 8th as well.

Julia Davids

In 1942, Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) set sail to return to England from America. Britten actually intended to use the month-long voyage to complete what would become his well-known *Hymn to St. Cecilia*, but these early sketches were confiscated by customs authorities who feared that the music was in fact a secret code. En route, he stopped in Nova Scotia, where he came upon *The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems*, a collection of medieval texts. These later became the collection we know as **A Ceremony of Carols**.

Shortly before departing the U.S., Britten had received a commission to compose a harp concerto, and in the meantime, he had begun to familiarize himself with the instrument. This provided the basis and

probably the inspiration for his choice of harp to accompany the vocal parts in *A Ceremony of Carols*. Although the first published edition of the work recommended that boy sopranos sing the three treble lines that comprise the chorus, Britten's early manuscripts show that he originally conceived of them as women's parts. Some years later, Britten authorized an arrangement of the piece for four-part mixed voices (possibly at the suggestion of his publisher).

A Ceremony of Carols consists of eight polyphonic settings of mostly anonymous 15th- and 16th century poems, which Britten had discovered in a handbook called *The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems* that he found in Nova Scotia while the ship was in port. These eight carols are bookended by statements of the Gregorian chant "Hodie Christus Natus Est" and midway through the set is an astounding interlude for harp solo that features this same plainchant tune. The carols themselves show a remarkable diversity of styles, from the jubilant exultations of "Wolcume Yule" and "Deo Gracias", to the pastoral solos of "That yongë child" and "Balulalow," to the martial urgency of "This Little Babe"'s expanding canon -- and whose vivid "holy war" between the infant and Satan must surely have been inspired by the real-life world war.

Ryan Turner (emmanuelmusic.org/notes)

A Holly Jolly Christmas was made famous by Burl Ives in his 1965 recording. And has become one of the top 25 most-performed holiday songs of all time. This arrangement by Joel Raney features not only numerous handbell techniques but also the combination of keyboard and handbells.

Andrea Handley

Impressions on Veni, Emmanuel by Kathy Moglebust expresses the mystery of the incarnation in its opening of random ringing and handchimes. It expresses the humanity of the incarnation in a lively

7/8 section, building to a climax of grandeur, and then returns to a statement of mystery at the conclusion.

Andrea Handley

Ríu, Ríu, Chíu is a Spanish carol derived from a 15th century dance form in the Iberian peninsula. This lively arrangement by Sondra Tucker features numerous handbell rhythmic techniques and builds to a breathtaking conclusion, involving an accelerando and a workout for the bass bells' ringers!

Andrea Handley

Carol of the Bells was written by Mykola Leontovych (1877-1921) in 1904, with lyrics written later by Peter Wilhousky (1902-1978). It is based on a Ukrainian folk chant and, long before the 20th century, was associated with New Year's celebrations and the Feast of Epiphany. The beautiful melody inspired Peter Wilhousky to write original lyrics and arrange the music into "Carol of the Bells" in 1936. Wilhousky was of Czechoslovakian heritage, received his B.A. from the Damrosch Institute of Musical Arts (Julliard), and was an eminent music educator. "Carol of the Bells" was brought to American audiences by the Ukrainian Republican Cappella Choir in the mid-twentieth century. Each section of the choir imitates different bells. This handbell arrangement by Andrea Handley begins and ends with an unusual technique called the singing bell – using a wooden dowel to produce a sustained sound somewhat like a Tibetan singing bowl.

Julia Davids

Sing We Now of Christmas is a French carol which is often heard at two holy days in the liturgical year, as it has a Christmas text and an Easter text ("Now the Green Blade Riseth"). As with many Christmas carols, each verse tells a different piece of the Christmas story, from the angels to the shepherds, to the manger, and the visit of the three

kings. This arrangement, by Kevin McChesney, features the use of mallets with the handbells which provide a driving rhythm throughout.

Julia Davids

Joy, Joy, Joy combines two joy-filled Christmas carols – ‘Joy to the World’ (*Antioch*) and ‘How Great Our Joy’ (*Jungst*). It is written especially for this occasion by Andrea Handley, and features handbells, organ, chorus, and percussion.

Andrea Handley