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THE CANTATA SINGERS

First Baptist Church
121 W. Church St.
Elmira, New York

February 22, 1976

Grace United Methodist Church
191 Bridge Street
Corning, New York

February 29, 1976

A SACRED CHORAL CONCERT OF AMERICAN MUSIC

PROGRAM

Organ Prelude

Toccata Deo Gratias Biggs

Choral Introit

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM 651

Processional

God of Our Fathers National Hymn 551

MASS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT Randall Thompson

KYRIE
GLORIA
CREDO
SANCTUS
BENEDICTUS
AGNUS DEI

Offertory Hymn

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies 550

Organ Offertory

Eclogue Kramer

Turn Ye, Turn Ye Charles Ives

The Last Words of David Randall Thompson

In The Beginning Aaron Copland

Helen Vincent, mezzo-soprano

Recessional

Eternal Father, Strong To Save 610

Organ Postlude

Melita arr. Noble

SOLI DEO GLORIA

THE CANTATA SINGERS

William O. Payne III, Musical Director

SOPRANO

Leslie Constanzer
Jacqueline Decker
Dorothy Hoos
Carol King
Theresa Mittelstadt

Sr. Juliana O'Hara
Carol Ransom
Anna Rice
Judith Sheasley

Judy Stanton
*Janice Strain
Mary Lou Strong
*Kay Wack

ALTO

Elizabeth Atkins
Martha Collins
Judith Feitner
Betty Grant

Claudia Hamlin
Patricia Hauser
Gloria Kirk
Cora Range

Sr. Mary Sayles
Florence Suffern
Janet Ty
Helen Vincent

TENOR

Robert Badertscher
* Edmund Dana

James Grant
Paul Holland

Richard Sheasley
Richard Wack

BASS

Richard Atkins
Richard Bauer
Christopher Fahy
Stuart Finch

Lyle Greenfield
David Hauser
Geoffrey Kelafant

Sidney Reed
Richard Schockner Jr.
Thomas Strain

* SOLOISTS:

Mass of the Holy Spirit — Janice Strain, soprano
Kay Wack, alto
Edmund Dana, tenor

ORGAN

Mrs. Robert Saxton

PIANO

Judith Feitner

PROGRAM NOTES

Born in New York in 1899, RANDALL THOMPSON completed a course of undergraduate study at Harvard University, where he later returned to earn a Master of Arts degree after studying composition with Ernest Bloch. He holds an undisputedly prominent place among American music educators, having served on the faculties of the University of California, Wellesley College, the University of Virginia, and Harvard University, as well as director of the world-renowned Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Although his compositions span many musical media, he is best recognized for his choral works.

The Mass of the Holy Spirit, completed in 1957, was written expressly for use at Whitsuntide, but it is equally appropriate in concert form or in the liturgical service. Observing the traditional form of the Mass, Thompson experimented with the application of instrumental compositional techniques in a choral medium. The entire Mass is written in English, with the exception of the Kyrie, which adheres to the traditional Greek text. The Gloria is conceived as a chorale prelude, with the alto, tenor, and bass accompanying the intoning of the cantus firmus, "Glory to God on High," by the soprano section. The Credo is declamatory in style, permitting the composer free use of rhythmic nuances and strikingly lush harmonies. The traditional "Amen" closing of the Credo is a study in twentieth century polyphony. In the Sanctus, Thompson employs the form of the classic prelude and fugue. The prelude is scored for divided chorus; the female voices sing the single word "Holy" while the male voices complete the text. All join in four part polyphony for the fugue, marked "Allegro con spirito." The Benedictus, a canon, is followed by the Hosanna, which derives its thematic material from the fugue of the Sanctus. The Agnus Dei, again canonic in form, is a traditional setting of the petition for mercy and peace.

The 1949 setting, "The Last Words of David," was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra to honor the twenty-fifth anniversary of the directorship of Dr. Serge Koussevitsky. The opening maestoso section is a straightforward admonition to the rulers of all men of all ages. A softening of text and harmony alludes to the omniscient ruler as envisioned by the patriarch, David. The work concludes with a contrapuntal "Allelulia, Amen."

AARON COPLAND, now in his seventysixth year, has been most aptly characterized as "the leading spirit in contemporary American music." His compositional achievements notwithstanding, he has lectured extensively, authored numerous articles, and worked tirelessly to organize and promote performances of the works of his colleagues and to aid and encourage young composers.

"In the Beginning" was written for the Harvard Symposium on Music Criticism, May 1947. While on first hearing, it may appear free in form and structure, closer inspection reveals sophisticated application of complex rhythms, harmonies, and polytonalities. Structurally, the work is divided into seven sections, each differing thematically and narrating the story of one day of the Creation. To unify the sections, Copland employs a brief, recurring harmonic phrase, sung in a higher key at each appearance. The composer opens the work by scoring for mezzo-soprano alone, suggesting the void from which His world is to be created. The soloist is thereafter assigned the task of narrating the text, while the mixed voices elaborate and embellish it in ever increasing density and intensity. The work concludes with a rich treatment of man's receiving the breath of life.

CHARLES IVES, born in Danbury, Connecticut, in 1874, would be considered a pioneer in today's American musical circles; his inventiveness and originality in his own era are truly remarkable. While a youth, he studied with his father, who taught piano, violin, and theory. After graduating from Yale University in 1898, he pursued a dual career as musician and business man (senior partner of a successful insurance firm.)

The anthem "Turn Ye, Turn Ye" was probably written sometime between April 1890 and April 1891. As organist at the Baptist Church in Danbury, Ives was often called upon to compose music for the weekly services. The text and original tune are borrowed from the hymnal "Laudus Domine" and are attributed to the Reverend Josiah Hopkins. The work approaches parody in that the sentimental, romantically Victorian style is contrary to the techniques and idioms usually employed by the composer.

- - M. B. Payne

TEXTS

The Last Words of David - 2 Samuel, XXIII, 3,4.

He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.
And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth,
Even a morning without clouds;
As the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.
Alleluia, Amen.

Turn Ye, Turn Ye

Oh, turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?
When God in great mercy is coming so nigh?
Now Jesus invites you, the Spirit says, "Come."
Angels are waiting, waiting to welcome you home.
So why will ye die?

And now Christ, now Christ is ready your soul to receive.

Oh, how can you question, if you will believe?
If sin is your burden, why will you not come?
Tis you He Welcomes, tis you He bids come.
So why will ye die?
Why will ye die?