



ORATORIO SINGERS

WESTFIELD, NEW JERSEY

TRENT JOHNSON, MUSIC DIRECTOR



A
Feast
of
Praise

Sunday, March 17, 2013

at 3 PM

First United Methodist Church
One East Broad Street, Westfield, NJ



Funding has been made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, through a grant administered by the Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs and by a grant from the Westfield Foundation.



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For membership information, call Janet Poland at 908-656-7418 or visit our web page at www.oratoriosingerswestfield.org.



Trent Johnson, Music Director

Trent Johnson is the Director of Music of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Bernardsville, NJ and is the Music Director and conductor of the Oratorio Singers of Westfield, NJ. He is an organist, composer, pianist and conductor. As conductor of the Oratorio Singers, he has led this organization in much of the standard literature for chorus and orchestra, including works of Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Verdi, Dello Joio, Bernstein, Kodaly, Poulenc and others, as well as several premieres of his own works. He is a graduate of the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University and The Juilliard School. Major conducting influences have come from his work with Frederick Prausnitz of the Peabody Institute, Dr. David A. Weadon of the Brick Presbyterian Church, and Norman Scribner of the Choral Arts Society of Washington, D.C.

An active organ recitalist, Mr. Johnson frequently performs in the major churches of New York City, Washington, D.C., Boston, Northern New Jersey and in Europe and Asia. In March/April 2011 he returned from a very successful concert tour of Russia, playing on many fine pipe organs. He has performed at the International Organ Festival in Kiev, Ukraine, where he played several organ recitals and gave a master class in composition. In 2005 he was invited by his alma mater the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University to present an organ concert, featured compositions, and an organ master class for students. In 2005 he also recorded the organ works of Pulitzer Prize winning composer George Walker for Albany Records. In 2006 and 2011 he was an organist at Radio City Music Hall in New York City where he played for the Christmas Spectacular Show. In January 2007 the New York Theater Organ Society invited him to appear in recital on the "Mighty Wurlitzer" organ at RCMH.

As a composer, recent premieres include his *Concertante for Organ and String Quartet* (2011) commissioned by the American Guild of Organists, with performers organist Marilyn Keiser and the Shanghai String Quartet, his *Celebration Overture* (2010) for orchestra celebrating the Oratorio Singers' 30th anniversary, and *In Homage of Spring* (2009) for soprano solo, chorus and orchestra, written for the Oratorio Singers. His viola and trumpet concertos, and *Elegy for Chernobyl* for organ and string orchestra premiered in April 2008 in Kiev, Ukraine as part of the Kiev Contemporary Music Festival. While in Kiev his concertos were recorded by the Kiev Camerata conducted by Valery Matiukhin.

Other premieres include the Westfield Symphony premiere of *The New Colossus* (2006), the premiere of his 2 *Vignettes for Quintet* (2006) at New York City's Merkin Concert Hall, commissioned by the Cygnus Ensemble, and the Oratorio Singers premiere of his *Five Psalms* (2005) for 4 soloists, chorus and orchestra. As a recording artist Mr. Johnson can be heard on Summit Records, Albany Records and the Xtreme Label. Mr. Johnson is the recipient of grants from Meet The Composer, funding from the NEA, and is the recipient of the Wladimir and Rhoda Lakond Award in composition from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City.

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Laudate!

by Paul Mack Somers,

Director of Adult Education, Bay-Atlantic Symphony

Music for brass ensemble has always been celebratory. It has long been associated with triumphant royalty and above that with the glory of God. Even when soft, it always sounds as if the kinetic energy is about to burst forth. In ancient times, well before the invention of metal instruments, the buzz of lips on the mouthpiece of a hollowed out animal horn, the ancestor of brass instruments, produced a vivid, even frightening sound, still heard in the ritual blowing of the shofar. Though today's program is not calculated to cast fear upon the listeners, it certainly is filled with praise, jubilation, and celebration as witnessed in the descriptive titles. The addition of chorus, organ, harp, and percussion to the brass only increases the excitement.

Though not performed first this afternoon, **Giovanni Gabrieli's** (1554-1612) influence permeates the entire program. He is best-known for his extraordinary music composed for the Basilica di San Marco in Venice. When he saw the interior space filled with balconies and alcoves, he envisioned them as places to be filled with musicians. In this magnificent space he invented what we would now call "surround sound" music: pieces for brass only and for chorus and brass together often using several locations around the church for different sets of musicians, a technique called "antiphonal" writing. Gabrieli knew how to compose a musical motive which is easy to understand and distinctive enough to be recognized when repeated. One hears this clearly in the antiphonal *Canzona Septimi Toni á 8* for brass and organ. And while neither his brass-only *Canzona prima á 5* nor his *Jubilate Deo* for brass and chorus is intended for antiphonal treatment, the *Canzona* contains passages in which the motives are passed from one instrument to another, while in the *Jubilate Deo* we hear the brass echoed in the chorus and *vice versa*. So seminal and ultimately iconic was Gabrieli's writing for brass and chorus that one still finds elements of it in music of succeeding centuries.

His massive "surround sound", for instance, is certainly at play in this afternoon's two works by **Ralph Vaughan Williams** (1872-1958), who is one of the greats in British music history.

This writer remembers well the deep sorrow exhibited within this church at his death. After all, who has not shed a mournful yet rejoicing tear when singing his great hymn tune *Sine Nomine* (For All the Saints)? So when this master set celebratory music for chorus, brass, timpani, and organ, he understood the large space, both physical and emotional, for which he was writing. He knew how to raise the hair on one's neck with thrilling sound, and in these two works he does his very best to do so. That we so often think of him in his expansive mode does not do his genius justice, for he could compose music of great tenderness. The central section of *O Clap Your Hands* hints at this facet of his skill. Yet the emotional lift is unforgettable when, in the very midst of the immensity of sound, we all together sing Vaughan Williams' setting of that great Loys Bourgeois (c.1510 – c.1560) hymn tune we call *Old 100th*. One rather forgets when hearing or singing this music that the composer had studied with that master of French subtlety, Maurice Ravel; but one cannot forget that he was the knowing heir of Gabrieli.

Mack Wilberg, the long time choral director at Brigham Young University, is less known to the general public. However, he is very well known to choral conductors for his original compositions and even more for his fine arrangements of folk songs and hymn tunes. In his two *Songs of Praise* he demonstrates that he clearly knows the music of Giovanni Gabrieli (see below), for the rhythmic vigor of the great Italian is one of the main features of Wilberg's music. The *Jubilate Deo*, which opens the concert, has syncopated rhythms which seem to spring more from renaissance dance music than from jazz. And in the *Laudate Dominum*, which closes the first half, he employs the steady beat of a timpanum with the chorus above – a nifty move, for Brahms' use of that same effect in his *German Requiem* is very famous. But Wilberg pulls it off by making it sound nearly primitive in its insistence. The predominant rhythm in this finale is a very catchy 1-2-3, 1-2, 1-2-3 division of eight beats. At other times it is in 7 or 5. This piece, always paired with the *Jubilate Deo*, is an increasingly famous choral work of no little difficulty, but with musical rewards commensurate with the work of preparation.



If you know the opening of *Also sprach Zarathustra* by **Richard Strauss** (1864-1949) – and who does not in today's post-2001: *A Space Odyssey* age? – then it should be no surprise to learn that the composer also composed a short work for brass choir which also builds to a big brass climax. It has the imposing name *Feierlicher Einzug der Ritter des Johanniter-Ordens* (Solemn Entry of the Knights of the Order of St. John). The piece described by Strauss himself as “slow and solemn” was composed in 1909 using fifteen trumpets, four horns, four trombones, two tubas, and timpani. Because of the prohibitive number of brass players, the work is now often played with organ and often as few brass as a quintet. In any version, Strauss can be heard to masterfully display his ability to build to successive climaxes, each larger than the previous, until the final chord is another post-Gabrieli hair-raising moment.

There came a time when **Randall Thompson** (1864-1949) found himself, and not necessarily by his original design, best-known as a choral composer. His first reputation was as a symphonist. Indeed, his Symphony no. 2 is a very fine work which was championed by Leonard Bernstein. Of course, Bernstein studied composition with Thompson at Harvard and thus could be accused of having a biased opinion, but his judgment was accurate. Ultimately, however, Thompson's ability to set a text – whether the simple single word *Alleluia*, his most famous work, or Isaiah's lengthy prophesy in *The Peaceable Kingdom* – with both great sensitivity and careful structural integrity elevated the vocal aspects of his career. While many of his peers like Walter Piston and David Diamond composed many symphonies and chamber works and barely any choral music, Thompson wrote only three symphonies and very little chamber music, all the while producing a large catalog of choral and vocal works including an oratorio and an opera.

A Feast of Praise was composed in 1963 on a commission from the music department at Stanford University to be

learned as part of a workshop of choral directors from college level to community groups. It was premiered that summer by the Stanford Summer Chorus with Thompson himself conducting. The texts of the three movements are respectively from the apocryphal Baruch 3:34, Psalm 81:3, and Psalm 47:5. While the outer movements are bright and bold, each section of the chorus having its own moment to shine in the otherwise contrapuntal third, the central movement verges on the eerie. The harp supports many iterations of *Blow up the trumpet in the new moon*, a strange nocturnal image. When the solo trumpet enters it is not so much a clarion call of praise, but more as if the invisible new moon has magically appeared. It is one of Thompson's most effective evocations.

Sir Hubert Parry (1848-1918) is probably best known for the hymn tune *Jerusalem*, which was featured in the film *Chariots of Fire*. But running a very close second in popularity, and perhaps now eclipsing it, is *I Was Glad*. It was, after all, the processional for the wedding of Charles, Prince of Wales and Diana, Princess of Wales in 1981 and again in 2011 for the wedding of their son Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge (formerly Kate Middleton). It came by this royal distinction quite naturally, for it was composed not for a “mere wedding” but for the 1901 coronation of Edward VII, King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions, and Emperor of India, and has been used since for the coronation of his successors George V in 1910, George VI in 1937, and then again for Elizabeth II in 1952.

British music often has a very distinctive long lined melody which holds together through the device called “musical question and answer”. By not allowing the melody to come to rest (a question), yet having recognizable elements within it, the long tune is spun out long enough for its final resolution to create a desired and effective close to a phrase (the answer). Parry here (and in *Jerusalem* as well) shows himself to be a master of this technique.



Old 100th

Ralph Vaughan Williams

(1872-1958)

<i>Audience and Chorus</i>	All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell; Come ye before Him and rejoice.
<i>Audience and Chorus</i>	The Lord, ye know, is God indeed; Without our aid He did us make; We are His folk, He doth us feed, And for His sheep He doth us take.
<i>Chorus</i>	O enter then His gates with praise; Approach with joy His courts unto; Praise, laud, and bless His Name always, For it is seemly so to do.
<i>Chorus</i>	For why? the Lord our God is good; His mercy is for ever sure; His truth at all times firmly stood, And shall from age to age endure.
<i>Audience and Chorus</i>	To Father, Son and Holy Ghost, The God Whom Heaven and earth adore, From men and from the angel host Be praise and glory evermore.

Jubilate Deo

by Mack Wilberg

(b 1955)

Jubilate Deo omnis terra, servite Domino in laetitia. Introite in conspectu ejus in exultatione.	Make a joyful sound to God, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Enter his presence with rejoicing.
Scitote quoniam Dominus ipse est Deus: ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos— populus ejus et oves pascue ejus. Introite portas ejus in confessione, atria ejus in hymnis.	Know that the Lord himself is God: he himself made us, and not we ourselves— his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with acknowledgement, his courts with hymns.
Confitemini illi, laudate nomen ejus, quoniam suavis est Dominus; in aeternum misericordia ejus, et usque generationem veritas ejus.	Be thankful to him, (and) praise his name, for the Lord is gracious; his mercy is forever, and his truth till every generation.



Canzona Prima a 5, for Brass Quintet

Giovanni Gabrieli

(1554–1612)

Canzona Septimi Toni a 8, for Brass Quartet and Organ

Gabrieli

Jubilate Deo

Gabrieli

Jubilate Deo, omnis terra.
quia sic benedicetur homo
qui timet Dominum.

Sing joyfully to God, all the earth:
for the man shall be blessed
who fears the Lord.

Jubilate Deo, omnis terra,
Deus Israel conjungat vos
et ipse sit vobiscum mittat vobis
auxilium de sancto, et de Sion tueatur vos.

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands,
The God of Israel, may He join you,
and may He be with you, may He send you help
from his Holy place and from Zion.

Jubilate Deo, omnis terra,
benedicat vobis Dominus ex Sion
qui fecit coelum et terrain,
Jubilate Deo, omnis terra,
servile Domino, in laetitia!

O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands,
May the Lord bless you out of Zion,
(the Lord) Who made heaven and earth.
O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands,
Serve ye the Lord with gladness!

Laudate Dominum

Wilberg

Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius.
Laudate eum in firmamento virtutis eius.
Laudate eum in virtutibus eius.
Laudate eum secundum multitudinem
magnitudinis eius.
Laudate eum in sono tubae.
Laudate eum in psalterio et cithara.
Laudate eum in tympano et choro.
Laudate eum in chordis et organo.
Laudate eum in cymbalis bene sonantibus.
Laudate eum in cymbalis iubilationis.
Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum!

Praise the Lord in his sanctuary.
Praise him in his mighty firmament.
Praise him for his mighty deeds.
Praise him according to the entire range
of his greatness.
Praise him with the sound of the trumpet.
Praise him with lyre and harp.
Praise him with timbrel and choral dance.
Praise him with strings and organ.
Praise him with resounding cymbals.
Praise him with joyful cymbals.
Let every breath praise the Lord!



Intermission

Solemn Entry, Brass Ensemble, Percussion and Organ

Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

O Clap Your Hands

Vaughan Williams

O clap your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
For the Lord most high is terrible. He is a great King over all the earth.
God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.
Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
For God is King of all the earth, sing ye praises everyone that hath understanding.
God reigneth over the heathen. God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness.
Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

A Feast of Praise

Randall Thompson
(1864-1949)

I. The stars in their watches

The stars shine in their watches, and rejoice: when He calleth them, they say,
Here we be; and so with cheerfulness they shew light unto Him that made them

II. Nocturne

Blow up the trumpet in the new moon

III. God is gone up with a shout

God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.
Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding

I Was Glad

Sir Hubert Parry
(1848-1918)

I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord.
Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is builded as a city that is at unity in itself.
Vivat Regina! Vivat Regina Elizabetha!
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls and plenteousness within thy palaces.



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The First United Methodist Church in Westfield
for providing us with rehearsal and performance space.*