

PROGRAM NOTES

Today's concert, "As the Prophets Foretold," explores the themes and persons of the Nativity story and their meaning for us today. We focus on the Biblical prophecies of Christ's coming, the Virgin Mary, the angels, the Christ Child, the shepherds, and the Wise Men—all woven into a tapestry of hope for an age of grace, glory, and peace.

We begin with the deep longing of Paul Manz's Advent motet, "E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come." Manz's wife wrote the text, inspired by verses from the twenty-second chapter of *Revelation*, while their three-year-old son was gravely ill. This is Manz's best-known anthem, and it is sung in churches of many denominations worldwide. It is the only work by an American composer in the standing repertoire of the Vatican.

Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) was the son and grandson of Lutheran theologians. Most of his nearly 1,000 vocal works are based on Protestant hymns and the Latin liturgy. His later works, including "Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen" and "Psallite unigenito," were written in an elegant yet accessible four-part chorale texture. He used German, the vernacular language, in order to touch his listeners simply and directly.

John Ness Beck, a native of Ohio and a faculty member of Ohio State University, left academia to concentrate on composing and publishing. He once said that early in his career he "wrote almost entirely difficult, challenging things...I think when I started, I was out to impress somebody." By contrast, the heartfelt "Every Valley" came to him easily, with the prophet Isaiah's message of justice bathed in wonderful warmth.

Glenn L. Rudolph's powerful "The Dream Isaiah Saw," commissioned by the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh, is dedicated to the memory of those who died in the September 11 terrorist attacks, and expresses the hope that ancient prophecies of peace can yet be fulfilled. It is a setting of theologian Thomas H. Troeger's poem "Lion and Oxen Will Sleep in the Hay." Troeger condemns not only the overt violence of "fang and claw" but also the injustice of "violence concealed [in] systems of gain"—words with startling relevance to the political and social issues of today.

Morten Lauridsen has been a professor of composition at the University of Southern California for nearly forty years, dividing his time between Los Angeles and his cabin on a remote island in the Pacific Northwest. Musicologist Nick Strimple describes him as a mystic whose "probing, serene work contains an elusive and indefinable ingredient which leaves the impression that all the questions have been answered." "Ave Maria" and "O magnum mysterium" are beautiful examples of his ethereal yet dramatic style.

North Carolina native Joseph M. Martin is a prolific composer with over 1,200 published compositions. He says, "Some of my most important works have been me struggling with things I have experienced or celebrating the things that have been joys in my life. I want people to fall in love with what their own song can bring to their lives." In "My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord," he and David Angerman paired the *Magnificat*—Mary's canticle of joy—with the English carol "Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day." The audience is invited to share their own singing in the last verse of his thrilling setting of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

John Rutter began publishing and recording while still a student at Cambridge University. He wrote the sprightly "Shepherd's Pipe Carol" when he was only 19. In 1988 he arranged and co-edited a major collection of *100 Carols for Choirs* with his former professor and mentor, Sir David Willcocks. Although he is renowned as a composer of sacred music, and Christmas music in particular, Rutter describes himself

as spiritual rather than strictly religious. “I love Christmas. It’s the child in me. Maybe I’ve never quite grown up. I still feel just for those few magic days a year, that we have the world as it might be.”

Bob Chilcott was formerly a chorister at King’s College, Cambridge, and a member of The King’s Singers. He composed “The Shepherd’s Carol” for the *Carols from King’s* broadcast on Christmas Eve in 2000. It is written in intricate eight-part harmony, yet creates an atmosphere of remarkable delicacy and tenderness. The text is by Clive Sansom (1910-1981), a Quaker poet, dramatist, and educator who wrote many verses for children. In his gentle words, we can easily imagine ourselves walking with the humble workers who were chosen to witness “God being born in the world.”

“There Shall a Star Come Out of Jacob” is the best-known portion of an incomplete oratorio by Felix Mendelssohn. The work, which his brother entitled *Christus*, was published posthumously. This movement opens with a brief recitative that introduces the three Wise Men at the beginning of their journey. It culminates with a reassuring statement of Philipp Nicolai’s Epiphany chorale, “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern” (“How brightly beams the morning star”).

The concert concludes with George Frideric Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus,” based on verses from *Revelation*. This chorus from *Messiah* may be characterized as a coronation anthem for Christ as the King of Kings. Amid the triumphant exclamations of “Hallelujah!” the most profound passage occurs at the awesome and transformative moment when “the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord.”

—Jamie Hagedorn