

## Program Notes

The North Shore Choral Society is delighted to welcome you to *Ring in the Season!* This marks the first event of our concert season, and we're pleased to be collaborating with the Chicago Bronze English Handbell Choir and NSCS long-time accompanist, organist Sharon Rich Peterson. We'll celebrate the coming of two holiday seasons as well – Thanksgiving and Christmas.

**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.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving** is an arrangement of Edward Kremser's hymn "We Gather Together." Kremser was a 19<sup>th</sup> century Austrian composer, arranger, and conductor who was especially active in collecting Viennese songs. Nathan Hofheins is an American composer who has arranged several pieces for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, including this piece, sung today, in an arrangement for choir and organ.

American composer and conductor Mack Wilberg (b. 1955) is known world-wide as the director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, a volunteer chorus of over 300 members, affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Wilberg attended Brigham Young University, as did Hofheins, and completed his graduate studies at the University of Southern California. His compositions and arrangements have been performed by numerous classical and popular artists, in addition to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's performances and recordings. Wilberg is especially gifted at arranging works for large choral forces, such as the two American traditional pieces you'll hear today. **Peace Like a River** is an African-American spiritual, and **Come, thou fount of every blessing** takes its melody from Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music* of 1813.

John Rutter (b. 1955), the British conductor, composer, and arranger, is no stranger to American audiences. Rutter grew up in London, England, and received his music training at Clare College in Cambridge where he also founded the Cambridge Singers. Primarily a choral composer, Rutter is best known for his Gloria, Magnificat, and Requiem settings although he has written numerous carols and anthems. **With heart and hands** was written for the Texas Choral Directors Association Convention in 2010 and combines the traditional hymn "Now thank we all our God," by Rinkart/Winkworth, with Rutter's own original lyrics and music. We encourage you to join in singing the hymn as indicated on the text pages!

**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.

**Carillon** was written by the French organist and composer Louis Vierne in 1914. It was part of a collection of pieces intended for service playing. It is one of a number of classical pieces that, although written for other instruments, sound glorious on handbells. The arranger Fred Gramann apparently agreed, and knows both instruments well as he is Organist at the American Church in Paris, and directs handbells there as well. It features a two-measure motif that is present throughout the entire piece in various forms, and amply utilizes a full 7-octave range of handbells.

James M. Stephenson (b. 1969) is also a conductor, composer, and arranger and has been commissioned by ensembles throughout America and the world. Stephenson studied at the New England Conservatory of music and then played trumpet with the Naples (FL) Philharmonic. He currently resides with his family in Lake Forest, IL, where he is Composer-In-Residence with the Lake Forest Symphony. Stephenson's list of works now includes concertos for every wind instrument in addition to violin and piano, and he has been commissioned to write for principal players of most of the top symphonies in the US. His **Magnificat** was commissioned by the Grand Rapids Symphony, Pearl Shangkuan, director, and premiered on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012. In seven movements, the traditional Latin text is presented in English in a sensitive setting that highlights the meaning of the words. Today the NSCS will perform the work in Stephenson's arrangement for Chorus and Organ. On Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> we'll join with the Evanston Symphony Orchestra to perform it under the baton of Maestro Lawrence Eckerling.

**Change Ring on 'Divinum Mysterium'** is a piece based on the 9<sup>th</sup> century plain chant which we know best to the text of "Of the Father's Love Begotten." This work references the art of change ringing – the systematic ringing of peals from tower bells in England and Europe which began in the Middle Ages and continues to this day. The first 8 measures feature a common change ringing peal based on a systematic changing of the order of four bells (1234, 2143, 2413, 4231, 4321, 3412, 3142, 1324) which continues to be heard throughout the work and proceeds to an ending which will feel as if you are standing right outside Westminster Abbey listening to the tower bells.

**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing** is an English Christmas carol originally written by Charles Wesley in 1739. The tune we know best came later, from the pen of Felix Mendelssohn. This arrangement by Cathy Moglebust, however, is somewhat beyond what Mendelssohn envisioned! It is full of irregular meters and syncopation that make it a fresh and unique arrangement of this old tune.

**What Child Is This**, based on the English folk tune *Greensleeves*, is a well-known Christmas carol. This handbell arrangement, by Cynthia Dobrinski, is a beautiful arrangement full of surprising key changes and increasing intensity.

**Go Tell It on the Mountain** is a well-known African American spiritual with a Christmas text. This arrangement for handbells was written by Hart Morris. It features the use of mallets almost throughout, as well as numerous percussion instruments.

**Carol of the Bells** was written by Mykola Leontovych in 1904, with lyrics written later by Peter Wilhousky. It is based on a Ukrainian folk chant, and long before the 20<sup>th</sup> century was associated with New Year's celebrations and the Feast of Epiphany. 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.

**Sing We Now of Christmas** is a French carol which is often heard at two times 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 handbell arrangement, by Kevin McChesney, features the use of mallets with the handbells, which provide a driving rhythm throughout.

**On This Day Earth Shall Ring** (*Personet Hodie*) is an ancient Christmas carol, written in 1582 in Finland. It was made popular in England by the well-known composer Gustav Holst in the 1920's. It begins with the text, “On this day earth shall ring with the song children sing to the Lord, Christ our King, born on earth to save us.” The chorus, “Ideo, gloria in excelsis Deo,” means “Therefore, glory to God in the highest.” William Payn is a well-known name in the handbell world, and utilizes the handbells in this arrangement to build to an ending that indeed seems as if the whole earth is ringing...and singing!

Written by Dr. Julia Davids and Andrea Handley