

## ***Program Notes***

Alleluia, Rejoice

arr. J. Edmund Hughes

This plainsong (sometimes referred to as *Gregorian* chant) utilizes a ninth century text and a fifteenth century melody. The men sing the familiar '*Veni Emmanuel*' and the women intone "Hodie Christus natus est" (Today Christ is born). The Latin text then calls for the righteous to rejoice saying 'Gloria in excelsis Deo, Alleluia', which leads to a dramatic segment where all voices sing individually and the bells ring randomly.

Veni Creator

Patrick Wedd

This hymn-anthem is a creative treatment of an original ninth century Latin plainsong, "*Come Holy Ghost our souls inspire*" arranged by Canadian composer, choral director and organist Patrick Wedd. It is an aleatoric setting, which means that some elements of the composition are left to chance and the discretion of the singers, ringers and conductor resulting in each performance being unique and unplanned.

Hodie Christ natus est

Healey Willan

Willan, often referred to as the Dean of Canadian Composers, wrote this piece for his choir at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Toronto. It has become a 'classic' in church choral repertoire. This piece shows Russian orthodox influences, as well as jazz. Willan's daughter, Mary, remembers Healey being taken out to a jazz tavern on Yonge St. in Toronto the day before he wrote this work the effects of which are self-evident.

Christmas Day

Gustav Holst

The sub-title of this piece is '*Choral Fantasy on Old Carols*' and the composer incorporates *Good Christian Men Rejoice*, *God Rest You Merry Gentlemen* and an old Breton melody, *Come, Ye Lofty, Come, Ye Lowly*. Over this merry carol, a soprano soloist introduces the melody of *The First Noel*, which is picked up by the tenors and basses. The piece moves to an uplifting 'Born is the King of Israel' and then modulates to a reprieve of the original theme, followed thereafter by a reflective interpretation by a contralto soloist.

Coventry Carol

arr. by J. Edmund Hughes

*Coventry Carol* is set often by choral composers but seldom in as creative, exquisite and sensitive ways as in this arrangement. The use of wind chimes and handbells only add to the expressive qualities of the piece.

Three Kings from Persian lands afar

Peter Cornelius

Cornelius, a German composer, writer and poet, penned this carol solo in 1874. The idea of superposing a Bach Chorale (*How Brightly Shines the Pointing Star*) was given to him by his tutor, Franz Liszt.

Fantasia on Christmas Carols

Ralph Vaughn Williams

Several years prior to the composition and publication of *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* in 1912, Vaughan Williams traveled throughout southern England to collect and write down as many English folk songs as he could find. Most of these folk songs existed only in the minds of their beholders and were close to becoming extinct. There are four English carols that make up this fantasia: *The Truth Sent From Above*, *Come All You Worthy Gentlemen*, *On Christmas Night* and *There is a Fountain*. The piece gains traction when the chorus rapturously announces "Come all you worthy gentlemen." This joyful tempo remains

throughout the rest of the work until the baritone soloist sings, "We wish you a happy New Year," and the piece ends with the chorus singing a stunning a capella, "Both now and evermore. Amen."

#### A Classic Christmas

arr. by Douglas E. Wagner

This arrangement is a medley containing three Baroque holiday masterworks woven together in a festive musical celebration. The piece builds on the works of Antonio Vivaldi (*Gloria in excelsis Deo*), J. S. Bach (*From Heaven above to Earth I Come*) as well as *For Unto Us a Child is Born* and the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*.

#### Mozart's Fa-La-La

arr. by Philip Kern

This arrangement is based on Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* chamber work composed in the middle of the classical music era. With the adding of some lyrics from *Deck the Hall*, a few "ho-ho-hos," and a lot of "fa-la-las," this piece is a choral novelty for the holidays.

#### So "Baroque" at Christmas

arr. by Earlene Rentz

The text of this hilarious arrangement is a tale of woe about not having money (i.e. being 'broke') at Christmas. "*Buying with plastic, oh, how drastic; credit becomes disaster faster. So baroque, I'm so baroque at Christmas...*" However, the ending text tells the audience that a song is a gift, and is joyfully presented to each person. The piece incorporates motives from *Messiah* as the "woe" is "woven".

#### Christmas Chopsticks

arr. by Audrey Snyder

Almost everyone has played or has heard *Chopsticks* as a duet on the piano; but did you know it can also be a Christmas song? The words of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* are set to the tune of *Chopsticks*, plus a bit of *Deck the Hall* and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, all supported by a four-hand piano accompaniment.

#### Nutcracker Jingles

arr. by Chuck Bridwell

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky composed his famous *Nutcracker Suite* in the 1890s. Contemporary arranger Chuck Bridwell incorporates the words and music of *Jingles Bells* and *Nutcracker Jingles* results. There are excerpts from four movements of the ballet: *March of the Toy Soldiers*, *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*, *Dance of the Reed Flutes* and *Waltz of the Flowers*. With audience participation, festive frivolity abounds!

#### Cold and Fugue Season

arr. by Ellen Foncannon

Ellen Foncannon has created a clever parody on J. S. Bach's famous *Fugue in G minor*. Before the singers introduce the fugal motive, however, we hear perhaps the most famous five bars of organ music ever composed – the opening of Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*. "We just want to sing this classy fugue for you", but sneezing, coughing and wheezing seem to get in the way.

#### Christmas Goes Classical

arr. David Maddux

Borrowing from some of the most famous tunes in all of classical music literature, arranger David Maddux cleverly adds a Christmas text resulting in this unique and festive piece for the Christmas season. The well-known themes include: Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Wagner's *Prelude to Act III of Lohengrin*, Grieg's *In the Hall of the Mountain King* from the *Peer Gynt Suite*, Verdi's *Anvil Chorus*, Bizet's *Toreador Chorus* from the Opera *Carmen*, Khachaturian's *Sabre Dance* from the *Gayane Ballet Suite* and finally, Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. Notes from the composer say: 'If there's ever a question about dynamics, always default to GENERAL LOUDNESS; and never should this piece be performed with other than much mock-hauteur, as if this bombastic approach to Christmas somehow lends the holiday a hefty sense of grandiosity it was otherwise lacking.'