



INTERNATIONAL SAMPLER May 8, 2010

This evening we are pleased to present an "International Sampler," showcasing some of the finest choral music by American composers and arrangers, and including works by Antonín Dvořák and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. In anticipation of our upcoming 75th anniversary, members of the Heritage Chorale will be traveling to Europe this summer on a concert tour with performances in Prague and Vienna, where we hope to delight our European audiences with much of the music you will hear this evening.

We open with two splendid works by Mozart. The text of the Pentecost motet *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* invokes the presence of the Holy Spirit; Mozart was only 12 years old when he composed this work, and his youthful exuberance is evident in every phrase of this spirited motet. *Laudate Dominum* (Psalm 117) is a movement from Mozart's *Vesperae solennes de confessore*, composed in 1780 while Mozart was in the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg. It features an exquisitely serene melody for solo soprano.

The young Antonín Dvořák composed several volumes of duets on Moravian folk poetry in the mid 1870's. These duets caught the attention of Johannes Brahms, who recommended them to his publisher, and the publication of these duets in 1878 helped to establish Dvořák's reputation as a significant composer. This evening we present three duets (arranged for full chorus), sung in the Moravian dialect of the Czech language. Their charmingly pastoral poetry is masterfully set to tuneful melodies, and Dvořák's poignant harmonic twists enhance the texts.

The major work on this evening's concert is *Lux Aeterna* by contemporary American composer Morten Lauridsen, who in 2007 received the National Medal of Arts "for his composition of radiant choral works combining musical beauty, power and spiritual depth that have thrilled audiences worldwide." Lauridsen uses these words to describe his work:

"Lux Aeterna was composed for and is dedicated to the Los Angeles Master Chorale and its superb conductor, Paul Salamunovich, who gave the world premiere in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion on April 13, 1997. The work is in five movements, played without pause. Its texts are drawn from sacred Latin sources, each containing references to Light. The piece opens and closes with the beginning and ending of the *Requiem Mass*, with the central three movements drawn respectively from the *Te Deum* (including a line from the *Beatus Vir*), *O Nata Lux*, and *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*."

A mystic serenity pervades Lauridsen's work, which is replete with flowing melodies (reminiscent of Gregorian chant) and rich, luminous harmonies. The jubilation of his setting of the Pentecost hymn *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* contrasts with the contemplative mood of the movements from the *Requiem Mass*. The joyful concluding *Alleluia* reaches a stunning climax and then subsides into a peaceful and hushed *Amen*.

The second half of this evening's concert opens with two sturdy American folk hymns. *Saints Bound for Heaven* is a boisterous, joyful hymn, arranged by Alice Parker and Robert Shaw. The austere melody of *The Promised Land* is heard in a moving arrangement by Ronald Staheli. Each verse is sung by a different "subset" of the chorus; the entrance of the full chorus for the climactic phrases creates a powerful effect.

Beloved American composer Randall Thompson was assistant professor of music and choir director at Wellesley College before he went on to teach at the Curtis Institute of Music, the University of Virginia, and Harvard University. Both selections by Thompson on this evening's program have connections with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. His most popular choral work, *Alleluia*, was commissioned for the opening of the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, and his powerful *Last Words of David* was commissioned by the Boston Symphony for the 25th anniversary of Serge Koussevitzky's directorship.

We conclude with a set of three African-American spirituals arranged by William Levi Dawson (1899-1990), who taught at the Tuskegee Institute from 1931 to 1956. Dawson's arrangements of spirituals are rhythmically exhilarating and vocally thrilling, and continue to enjoy immense popularity among choral groups in America and throughout the world.

John Finney