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October, 1982

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Handel's *Laudate pueri*

by MARY ANN PARKER-HALE

Handel's early years have been something of a mystery. According to his first biographer, the Reverend John Mainwaring: ". . . by the time he was nine he began to compose the church service for voices and instruments, and from that time actually did compose a church service every week for three years successively."[1] None of these works has survived, but a cantata based on the chorale *Ach Herr mich armen Sünder* was once attributed to Handel.[2] A more likely candidate for Handel's earliest surviving choral work is a St. John Passion on a text by the Hamburg poet Heinrich Postel. Although the choral sections of the Passion seem to foreshadow the breadth and dramatic power of the English oratorios, serious doubts have recently been raised about the authenticity of the work.[3]

The earliest known choral works by Handel may well be three psalm settings composed during the young composer's stay in Italy. Why Handel decided to journey south, and under what circumstances he did so, is uncertain. Having left Hamburg some time late in 1706, he traveled to Rome, probably stopping in Florence on the way. In the Holy City, he dazzled audiences with his virtuoso organ playing and found his way into the most prestigious circles. His immediate acceptance resulted in a number of commissions; one of these came from Cardinal Colonna, in whose residence Handel stayed for a time. The evidence suggests that Colonna invited Handel to write a number of pieces for the festival of Our Lady of Mount Carmel that took place on July 16, 1707, at the small church of Monte Santo in Rome.[4] Handel complied with settings of two antiphons and a motet

[1]John Mainwaring, *Memoirs of the Life of the late George Frederic Handel* (London, 1760; rep. New York, 1980) pp. 15-16.

[2]Friedrich Chrysander, *G. F. Händel* I (Leipzig, 1857) p. 66.

[3]Werner Braun, "Echtheits- und Datierungsfragen im vokalen Frühwerk Georg Friedrich Händels" *(Händel-Konferenz Bericht;* Halle, 1961) pp. 61-63.

[4]James S. Hall, "Handel among the Carmelites" *(The Dublin Review* 479, 1959) pp. 121-131.

appropriate to the feast, and during the spring and early summer of 1707 he completed three of the required Vespers psalms — *Dixit Dominus, Laudate pueri* and *Nisi Dominus.*

In later years, Handel drew upon all three works, and none was so valuable to him as his setting of Psalm 113, *Laudate pueri* (Psalm 112 in the Vulgate).[5] Not only does music from *Laudate pueri* reappear in the English church music and oratorios, but the work also affords a unique link with the composer's formative period in Halle, his birthplace. One of the earliest extant Handel autographs, now in the British Library, contains a version of the same psalm text for solo soprano, two violins and continuo. Written in an irregular, small, even cramped, hand, the manuscript stands in striking contrast to the bold autographs of the mature composer. The setting itself shows Handel reaching for the bright instrumental style of eighteenth-century Italy, but it is still firmly rooted in the seventeenth-century tradition of the sacred concerto.

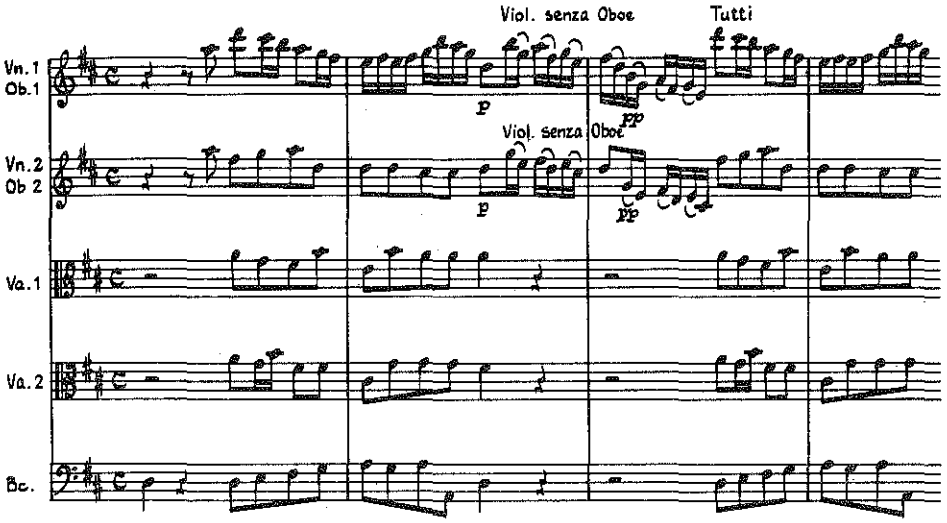
In 1707, when Handel returned to his early work in the composition of the choral psalm, he retained several passages as solo numbers for soprano, revising them in accordance with current Italian practices and an enlarged instrumental ensemble. For the remaining verses, he fashioned four choral movements out of corresponding solo pieces from the original setting.

The most elaborate of these is the brilliant first verse, an extended concerto movement which owes much of its effect to the role of the solo soprano, the *soprano concertato.* The opening ritornello, which contains the melodic substance of the entire movement, is like a small concerto movement in itself. The concept of reduced forces *versus* the full ensemble is represented in the alternation of violin passages with *tutti* phrases (Ex. 1).

Throughout the movement, Handel uses the *soprano concertato* in various combinations — in dialogues with oboes and violins, doubling or engaging in brief duets with the *soprano cappella,* and pitted against the entire ensemble. With this plethora of combinations, the structure of the movement becomes remarkably elaborate. Nevertheless, it is cohesive by virtue of thematic unity, the most important factor contributing to the singular quality of the choral writing. Since the chorus sings passages drawn directly from the instrumental ritornello, it abandons normal vocal idioms. The dense counterpoint and massive homophony of sacred music by Handel's German and Italian

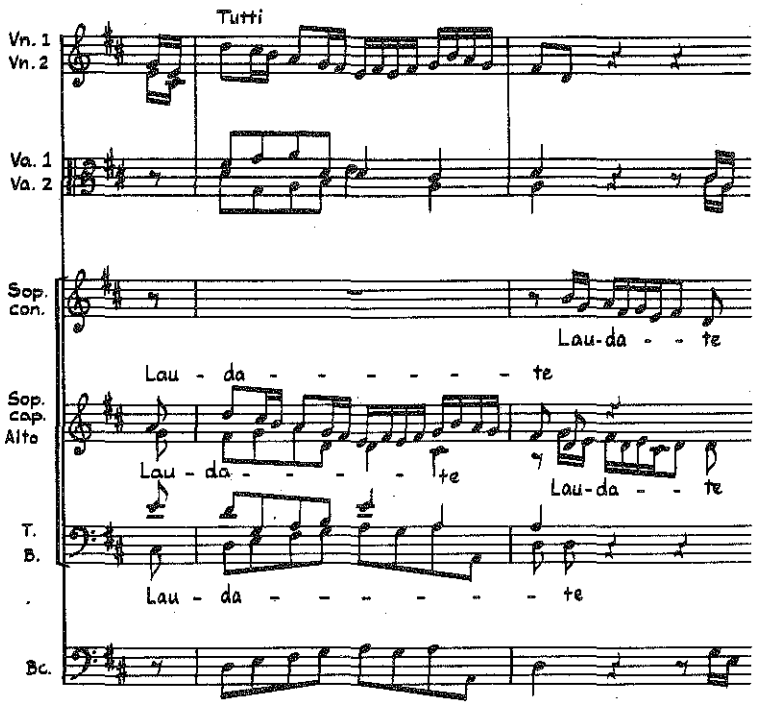
[5]The setting of *Laudate pueri* for soprano soloist, chorus and orchestra is available in Friedrich Chrysander, ed., *G. F. Händels Werke,* volume 38 (Leipzig, 1872). A performing edition was made by Fritz Stein for Peters in 1930.

EXAMPLE 1



contemporaries is replaced by a lighter, sunnier style more in keeping with the exultant psalm text. For example, when the chorus first enters, it assumes the texture of a simple three-part accompaniment to the opening melody (Ex. 2).

EXAMPLE 2

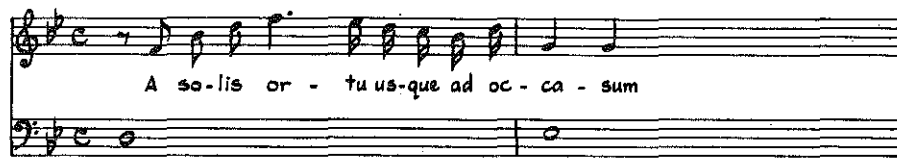


The transfer of instrumental themes to the choral medium produces intriguing results later in the movement, when the chorus, spread over a wide range, moves in swiftly alternating sixth chords to produce a rich effect on the word "laudate." Finally, the climax is intensified by a passage in which the choral parts move in ascending staccato notes to accompany a florid soprano solo.

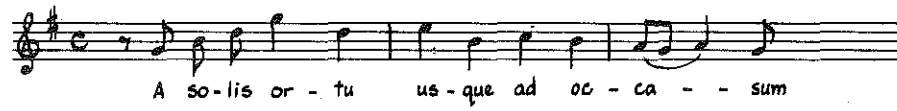
Handel's German heritage played an especially strong role in the recasting of the third psalm verse — "From the rising of the sun until the going down of the same, the Lord is to be praised." He retained the general shape of the opening phrase he had used in the early solo setting, depicting the sun's rising and falling with its upward and downward motion (Ex. 3).

EXAMPLE 3

a) Early version



b) Rome version

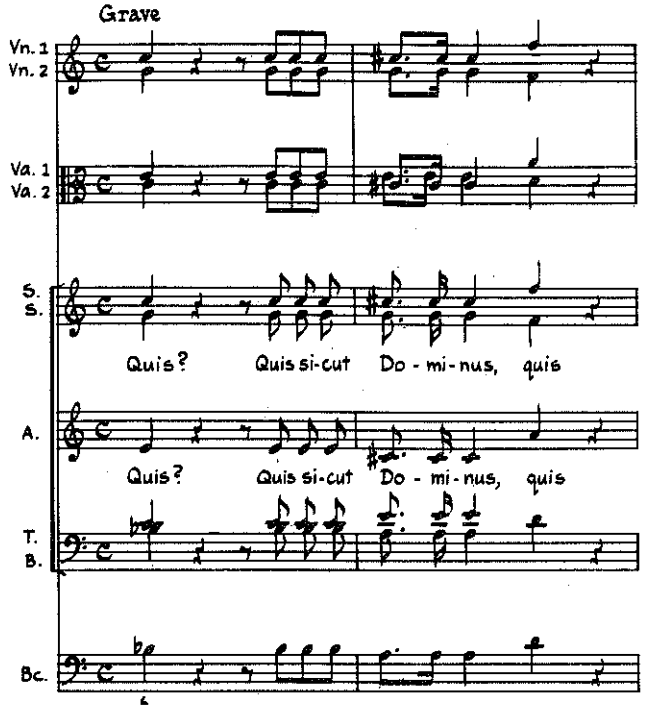


But he changed the melody fundamentally, giving the new phrase strong harmonic implications, and solidifying the meter of what had been a quasi-recitative. The result is very much like a line from a chorale, and it is well-suited for use as a *cantus firmus* in the choral movement. In fact, its similarity to the third line of *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* may not be coincidental.[6] As in the early version, Handel conceived the first half of the verse as a syllabic line, while setting the second half in a more florid style. In the choral work, the two lines appear in alternation, and they are also combined as subjects in a series of impressive double-fugue textures.

[6]Cf. the references to various Protestant chorale quotations in Handel's works, used apparently in accordance with the meaning of the respective English texts, in Alfred Mann, "Zum deutschen Erbe Händels," in *50 Jahre Göttinger Händel-Festspiele,* Walter Meyerhoff, ed. (Göttingen/Kassel, 1970) pp. 53-54.

The origins of yet another well-known Handelian choral effect are revealed in the single movement that comprises the fifth and sixth verses of the psalm. In the early *Laudate,* "Quis sicut Dominus" took on the characteristics of a dramatic accompanied recitative. The rhetorical effect of setting the initial question as a recitative must have seemed so imperative to Handel that he retained it five years later, even though he was now writing for chorus. Here, the entire ensemble participates in the reciting patterns in a *colla parte* recitative (Ex. 4).

EXAMPLE 4



In the concluding doxology of the psalm, the joyful mood reappears in an opening duet for solo oboe and *soprano concertato.* When the chorus finally enters, it is with a triumphant "Gloria," but the feeling of lightness is maintained throughout the movement. Unlike the five-part ensemble in "A solis ortu" and "Quis sicut Dominus," it is a four-part chorus, in much the same simple homophonic style we might expect in a serenata or the finale of an opera.

Festive concerted psalm settings of the period frequently ended with fugues, starting either at "sicut erat in principio" or "et in saecula

saeculorum," as in Handel's own *Dixit Dominus.* Here, Handel chose instead to reintroduce the melody of the psalm's beginning, with a slight change in the upbeat to accommodate the new text. Then, instead of a contrapuntal *tour de force,* he completed the setting with an extended coda based on the ascending staccato passage from the first movement. Fittingly, the work ends with the emphasis on brightness and virtuosity.

Handel's experience as a choral composer in Italy proved not only an artistic turning point, but also an invaluable resource in his quest for acceptance by the English people. His opera *Rinaldo,* introduced at the Haymarket Theatre in February, 1711, was a raging success. However, as Handel was to discover, theatrical audiences are fickle. Far more important to his ultimate entrenchment in England was the diplomatic coup of his commission for the Utrecht *Te Deum* and *Jubilate.* When it was performed on July 7, 1713, the *Te Deum* was so well received that it joined Purcell's St. Cecilia *Te Deum* in the standard repertoire at St. Paul's.

Handel composed the *Te Deum* well in advance of the celebration, but the *Jubilate* seems to have been left to the last minute.[7] Perhaps he anticipated that the first movement of his Italian *Laudate pueri* could be used with little adaptation; it is set in an appropriate key for celebration, and it features a memorable joyous theme. He composed trumpet parts, added minor variations to the melodic line and shortened the movement. Four years later, Handel rewrote the music of the Utrecht *Jubilate* for three-voiced chorus as the first Chandos anthem.

The lack of attention paid by modern Handel interpreters to *Laudate pueri* is all the more curious when we consider the value the composer himself placed on it. Fully forty years after its composition, he drew upon it again for the "Glory to God" chorus in *Joshua.* The original oboe parts are taken by trumpets and horns, the soloist is a tenor instead of a soprano, and the structure of the movement is different, but all the themes of the "Gloria patri" from *Laudate pueri* are there.

Not only *Laudate pueri* provided material for Handel's English choral compositions; music from *Dixit Dominus* and *Nisi Dominus* reappears in the Utrecht *Te Deum,* the Coronation anthems, the tenth Chandos anthem, *Deborah,* and *Israel in Egypt.* Even so, the most significant legacy of the Roman psalms lay in the wealth of choral language that Handel developed under the influence of the Holy

[7]Paul Henry Lang, *George Frideric Handel* (New York, 1966) p. 129.

City. Perhaps the most innovative aspect of the psalms is the choral recitative in *Laudate pueri.* The combination of recitative style with the question "Quis sicut Dominus" was so successful that Handel later used the procedure when setting similar texts, for example "For who is God?" in the tenth Chandos anthem, and also in "For the Lord is great" in the fourth Chandos anthem. "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?" from *Israel in Egypt* recalls "Quis sicut Dominus" almost exactly. The same work led to the ultimate perfection of Handel's choral recitative in the darkness chorus, in which the voices graphically seem to grope and lose one another in the choral *parlando.*

Handel's contrapuntal skill and knowledge of the choral medium date from his early German years, but his sojourn in Italy changed the direction of his choral style. Not only did he assimilate the brilliant *concertato* manner, but he was deeply affected by the monumentality and flexibility of style in the sacred choral works of Italian composers. He was ready to open an entirely new chapter in the history of choral music.

In Memoriam

Julius Herford

American choral conductors have lost in Julius Herford a foremost mentor and affectionately honored guide. Born in 1901 in Berlin, he made his debut as a concert pianist before the age of twenty and was appointed conductor of one of Germany's most prestigious choruses before the age of thirty. Having been active in various European countries, he was driven from his homeland by the Nazi regime, came to this country in 1938, and held teaching posts at various major American universities. In 1935 he was introduced to Robert Shaw by Lukas Foss, one of his Berlin students; and then began a unique career in which Julius Herford became the father figure for a generation of the finest of American choral conductors. Much of his work has been described in a Robert Shaw biography issued in 1979 from which the photograph is reproduced with the kind permission of the publishers.[1] *The following tribute was written for the* American Choral Review *by one of Julius Herford's students and colleagues, who served as his assistant for two years when he was teaching at the Westminster Choir College in Princeton.*

* * *

Julius was a great teacher because he always considered himself to be a student. No matter how well he knew a score, however simple or complex, he approached it as if for the very first time. The wonder of discovery and understanding musical structure, which he communicated with such ebullience to his students, was a passion that possessed him throughout his life.

[1]Joseph A. Mussulman, *Dear People . . . Robert Shaw* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press).

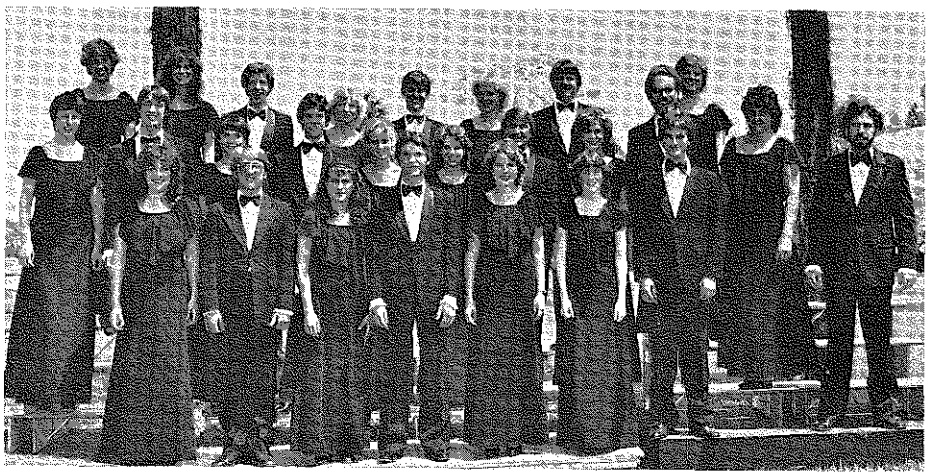
Shaw, Lukas Foss, and Julius Herford, 1953. Photograph by John Gass

Score studies with Julius were never theoretical abstractions; specific harmonic and contrapuntal techniques in themselves were obvious to him. It was how they were used to build a phrase that occupied his attention, for he considered the phrase the lifeblood of any score. He was a magnificent pianist, capable of drawing ravishing tone from the meanest, most recalcitrant instrument, and when he illustrated at the keyboard, even the most familiar phrase glowed with new vitality. Some of his most inspiring classes at Westminster occurred when, after a discussion of a score, he would go to the piano and begin a movement of a Mozart string quartet, a Haydn symphony, or a Bach cantata. Each musical line could be heard, and, miraculously, the tonal color of each intended instrument.

Beyond that, Julius was an example of a musician who lived his life by the light of absolute musical integrity, and he taught us by his example. When that light could no longer sustain him, he quietly left us.

— Ann Waters

Madrigal Awards

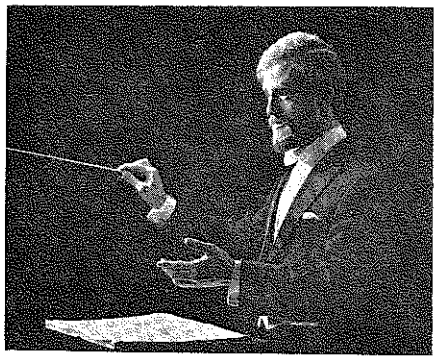


South Mecklenburg High School Chamber Singers
Marc Setzer, Director

When the conductor of a high school group in Pineville, North Carolina, recently won the Louise Rogers Goucher Scholarship, the picture of a first cross-section of deserving American madrigal ensembles was nicely rounded. Marc Setzer, the young director of the South Mecklenburg High School Chamber Singers, had chosen a program (*English Part Songs – Old and New*) that took his madrigal singers from the works of Thomas Morley to madrigal settings by Emma Lou Diemer, a Fulbright winner. Early American part songs were represented by the satirical "Modern Music" from *The Psalm Singer's Amusement* (1781) of William Billings and by his famous "Chester," hymn of the Revolutionary War. Twentieth-century British — or rather Welsh — settings included in the program were *Prayers from the Ark* by Ivor Davies (Prayer of the Mouse; Prayer of the Cat; Prayer of the Raven; Prayer of the Dove). Setzer earned his laurels twice because within three weeks of receiving the award he and his singers were winners of the Grand Championship, highest rating given in the Southern Choral Classic Competition held at Orlando, Florida.

The Louise Rogers Goucher Scholarship Fund was placed in trust with the American Choral Foundation in 1979 for yearly grants

to young American choral conductors in support of projects devoted to the performance and literature of the madrigal — a field of study that had distinguished the life work of Louise Rogers Goucher. Under the grant program, the award has gone to Ward Jamison, conductor of the Doane (Nebraska) College Choir, and Donald Kendrick of Hamilton, Ontario, whose madrigal group the critic of their performance described as "a sixteen-voice crack ensemble."



DONALD KENDRICK

WARD JAMISON

It seems to us of special interest that a fourth award winner chosen received this recognition for a study project that will lend a distinct further dimension to the program. Christopher Reynolds, a young Ph.D. from Princeton, until last year director of the Madrigal Singers of the University of Illinois and at present director of the Concert Choir at McGill University, will pursue a study program devoted not to performance but to publication.

Active as a scholar and writer as well as in choral performance, this award recipient has proposed a project that ought to prove of value to many of his colleagues. It will be concerned with the questions of form in the madrigal of the High Renaissance. He writes: "I have selected the madrigals of Marenzio and Gesualdo because these works are held to be preoccupied with the musical depiction of textual details to the exclusion of broader musical organization." To show that this approach does an injustice to the music — and that disregard of the large-scale formal intent in these

madrigals normally mars their performance — will be the subject of his study. It will be published as a special issue of the *American Choral Review.*

Applications for the award should be made by letter submitted in triplicate and addressed to the Louise Rogers Goucher Memorial Fund, The American Choral Foundation, Inc., 130 West 56 Street, New York, New York 10019. They should include a brief resumé, the applicant's plans of study and resulting work, and the names of two references. The deadline for new applications is October 1, 1983.

Choral Performances

New York — Shortly before Samuel Barber died at the age of 70, he was able to look back over his composing career and find little reason to feel sorry for himself. He had been one of music's golden boys from the start; famous artists hurried to perform his works with a promptness not often awarded to living composers. Some of his works, of course, fared better than others in this respect. A relative rarity, his *The Prayers of Kierkegaard*, received last season what was described as the score's "first performance in a major New York City concert hall."

This seemed strange, inasmuch as this large-scale piece for mixed chorus and orchestra dates from 1954 and presents few obstacles to listener appreciation. The performance, by the Brooklyn Philharmonia Chorus and Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Alexander Dashnaw, was strong enough to show the work in a good light, despite some roughness of choral tone and raggedness of instrumental ensemble. An earlier and more familiar Barber piece, *Reincarnations* (Op. 16), set the mood nicely for the religious-philosophical contemplations of the Kierkegaard texts.

The Prayers of Kierkegaard may at first strike today's listener as somewhat modish. Existentialism — or rather, chat about existentialism — was very much in the air back in the 50's, when Mr. Barber chose this text. But the music does not suggest anything faddish or superficial. The composer plainly found a great deal with which to connect in Kierkegaard's dour message. But music is music, not philosophy, and the Barber brand of lyricism ends up infecting the whole work. It is hard to remain cheerless when such a master of the vocal craft is blending vagrant strands of tone into mellifluous wholes. Not that this score is essentially one long sweet tune; in fact, the dominant mood is dark, and the sense of individual solitude and struggle that Existentialists believe is at the core of life came through powerfully.

Anyone predisposed to play the game of Influences could have heard echoes of Stravinsky and even Orff at times, but always

apparent, too, was the highly personal Barber style, with its elegantly dovetailed vocal lines and periodically contrasting outbreaks of — what? Outrage, anger, melodramatic posing? At any rate, *The Prayers of Kierkegaard* does not deserve to be left on the shelf when so many far less attractive scores are making the concert rounds every year.

—Donal Henahan

Newark — A year ago, Michael Redmond, music critic for *The Star-Ledger* of this city, reviewed in this column the United States premiere of a *Te Deum* by Johann Nepomuk Hummel, the celebrated piano virtuoso who was Mozart's student and Haydn's successor as Esterházy *Kapellmeister.* The revival of Hummel's work as a choral composer attracted so much attention that it gave rise to an unusual sequel: This spring, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, with a specially gathered Festival Chorus of 100 voices, offered, under the direction of John Eric Floreen, what was billed as the modern world premiere of the composer's *Missa Solemnis in C*, a fifty-minute work in the best symphonic tradition. It had remained unpublished and had not been heard anywhere since 1826; it was composed for the wedding of Prince Leopold Esterházy in 1806.

The event was deservedly well received. In a *New York Times* editorial entitled "Could a Revival of Hummel's Music be at Hand?", Harold Schonberg wrote:

> The interest in Hummel is not as mad or unexpected as it might sound. There's something in the air. Within the last five years musicians have become fascinated with pre-Romantic composers, and that is something new in musical scholarship. Until then those predecessors of Romanticism had been all but forgotten.... Of this group of pre-Romantics, Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) was the most important.[1]

It is not often that a revival of this kind is given a framework that acquaints the public fully with the significance of the venture, but that was exactly what happened in this case. The *Missa Solemnis*, which the conductor plans to publish, was presented amidst various other works by the composer in a week-long festival that included the performance of orchestral music, chamber music, piano and organ works, another choral piece (*Tantum ergo*), and a festival seminar that featured the use of a restored fortepiano used by the composer himself.

[1]*The New York Times,* April 25, 1982.

The remarkable extent of preparations was made possible in part by a newly established Los Angeles foundation devoted to the work of Hummel, which was founded by William Hummel, a direct descendant, who attended the festival. That the Hummel Foundation represents more than a curiosity of family interest is attested to by its valuable collection which includes letters of Goethe and Mozart and personal belongings of Haydn and Beethoven. The Foundation's eventual aim is the complete issue of Hummel's music, towards which an important step was taken with this premiere performance of the *Missa Solemnis*. The excellent soloists were Nancy Amini, Susan Sacquitne, Seth McCoy, and David Scott.

— A.M.

Fort Wayne, Indiana — "The man that hath no music in himself, nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, is fit for treason, stratagems and spoils." So said William Shakespeare.

And so sang the Philharmonic Chorus, joining the Indiana Chamber Orchestra in a recent performance of Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music*. Composed for Sir Henry Wood's golden-jubilee concert in 1938, it is one of those extremely rare things, an occasional piece that outlasts its occasion. It employs the lovely nocturnal eulogy of music in Act V of *The Merchant of Venice* and far outdoes it in its beauty; if, in fact, this is not the most sheerly beautiful piece of music that has ever occurred to the mind of man, it comes close to it. Its ravishingly sweet principal theme twines its way among the modal harmonies with an occasional dissonance rippling across the streams and English landscape.

Conducted by chorus-master John Loessi, the effect of the performance was entrancing, quietly radiant, "letting the sounds of music creep in our ears." The work originally called for sixteen singers, but Loessi used his entire Philharmonic Chorus of about one hundred voices. (Who would dare deprive a chorus member of singing so beautiful a composition?) The solo parts were nicely projected by Dorothy Kittaka, Margaret Brenner, Cathy Kreigh, Dan Albers, Charles Macklin, and violinist John Ewing.

* * *

In the tragic aftermath of the deaths of three of his children, only a year apart, Antonin Dvorak composed his first oratorio, *Stabat Mater,* based on the medieval Marian poem describing Mary's sorrow at the foot of the cross. It is about death, but not without the vision of glory in Paradise. The great Czech composer's text, a challenging one because of its unvarying meter, elicits a measured response, and in Vincent Slater's hands (with the help of fine soloists and the chorus of Plymouth Congregational Church and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception) kept a pitch of subdued intensity throughout at the cathedral before a large audience.

The influence of Brahms can be felt strongly in *Stabat Mater*, but, as in almost everything Dvorak composed, his own spirit comes through — in the melodies, in the chromatic texture, in the resonant scoring and in those breathtaking modulations. Dvorak was a devout man and his pure devotion animates every note of the piece.

Stabat Mater is a wonderful piece of music and an intense religious experience. Vincent Slater and the choirs are to be thanked for bringing it back after a fifteen-year absence.

* * *

Of all the major composers, probably no one is better qualified for having been "taken for granted" more often than Franz Joseph Haydn. It seems to have required a special birthday anniversary, such as the current 250th, to once more make us totally aware of his greatness. The Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, the University Singers of Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne, and three fine soloists did just that this season, with a thrilling account of one of the great oratorios of all time, *The Creation.*

On a visit to London, the aging master of orchestral and chamber music heard the oratorios of Handel. They were a revelation to Haydn in their choral glorification of Scripture. At the age of sixty-five, he went to work on a text from Genesis and Milton's *Paradise Lost* and poured into it the deepest resources of his profound religious and musical mind. *The Creation* is a culmination of Baroque and Classical choral tradition as well as a look ahead to the Romantic. Eternally fresh, sweet, natural, flowing, Haydn's musical picture of the Creation is marked by the special qualities of invention, economy, restraint, and inspiration. It is a bright-hued work with lovely melodies and unaffected, almost naive, imitations of animals and nature.

A presentation of *The Creation* succeeds or fails with its conductor, for the balance of disparate elements is like almost no other in music. Along with the simplicity of Haydn's faith there goes sublime and noble expression and awe-inspiring fervor. Ronald Ondrejka handled the chain of diverse elements authoritatively from the slow introduction to the final chorus of praise. He paced the work beautifully, pushing it at just the right moments without limiting the singers in their freedom of expression.

The performance was an endless succession of delights. Prominent purveyors of these were the three soloists. Heard in the roles of Gabriel and Eve, Elizabeth Parcells' light, clear soprano was exquisitely handled in the coloratura of "Now robed in green" ("With verdure clad" in the old Novello edition) and in "On mighty wings." Malcolm Smith had the rich, rolling bass voice required for the part of the archangel Raphael. The eloquent recitative and florid aria about the creation of the beasts of the earth was most memorable. As Adam, Smith balanced his larger voice nicely with the lighter-voiced Parcells. Tenor Glenn Siebert had a little less opportunity to shine, but his style and phrasing, especially in the aria "In shining splendor," was excellent. Prepared by John Loessi, the chorus — around 150 strong — was well suited for its role as the heavenly host, sailing into the zesty choruses of praise with the spontaneity of amateurs and the precision of professionals. The orchestra was also most responsive, with the first-chair players making some excellent contributions in the all-important solo passages. Prolonged applause is not ordinarily given to oratorio performances, but the Philharmonic's presentation of *The Creation* had the large audience on its feet cheering at the conclusion.

—Herbert Nuechterlein

Los Angeles — Billed as "An English Christmas," a program assembled by Roger Wagner as the Los Angeles Master Chorale's annual musical Christmas card more closely resembled a pastiche (or shall I say "pudding"?) whose primary ingredient was old chestnuts. Wagner led his singers through three performances of a program that saw Vaughan Williams's corpulent *Hodie* share billing with a slender entertainer, Shirley Jones, who, in an unscheduled Christmas present, rang out with two seasonal standards, *O Holy Night* and *Adeste Fidelis.* Enough said about that.

Hodie, a work less familiar to American ears than to British, is a stylistic grab-bag from the composer's last years. Utilizing texts from diverse sources such as scripture, Milton, Thomas Hardy, and even his second wife, Ursula, Vaughan Williams created a meditative choral cantata ranging in mood and texture from the massive to *a cappella* simplicity.

Appropriately enough, the chief protagonist was the Master Chorale which sang with its accustomed opulent tone and fine sense of ensemble — the latter the more remarkable given a chorus of nearly one hundred voices. Particularly vibrant moments were the recurring "Emmanuel, God with us" and the Epilogue "Ring out, ye crystal spheres" which brought the work to a stirring conclusion. A musical moment this listener found totally irresistible occurred during the unaccompanied chorale "No sad thought his soul affright." It was lovingly sung with carefully shaped phrases of creamy tone.

In order to insure a basically successful result, however, a prerequisite component in the performance of *Hodie* is a vocal trio of distinction equal to that of the chorus. Failing that, potentially sublime moments such as "It was the winter wild" are lost. Soprano Maurita Phillips-Thornburgh rendered her lines with poetic charm, but was frequently unable to muster the vocal resources to effectively counter a surging orchestra. Byron Wright's *tenorino bianco* encountered similar hurdles with even less success. Kerry Barnett, while possessing a baritone voice of ample size and warmth, often displayed poorly focused tone, flabby vowels, and pitch insecurity. Fortunately, all was marked by the intrepid musical pacing of Roger Wagner who consistently underscored the dramatic and lyrical moments, while keeping an occasionally unruly orchestra in check.

Considerable musical ground was sacrificed in the second half of the program. Following intermission the proceedings assumed a cloyingly repetitive character by the juxtaposing of an instrumental medley of familiar carols with something entitled *The Christmas Story According to St. Luke*. The latter turned out to be a Wagner concoction consisting of the scriptural narrative (read by Miss Jones) interspersed with choral arrangements of most of the carols previously heard in instrumental dress. Overkill.

In the interim, the audience was favored with performances of the Vaughan Williams setting of *Wassail Song*, and a Roger Wagner arrangement of *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* (an unacknowledged geographical departure from the English Christmas); these and several other selections found the Chorale in top form, wassailing

with great haste but consummate control in the former, and showing an impressive grasp of modulatory pitches in *Lo, How a Rose*.

The two-and-one-half hour program was brought to an anti-climactic conclusion with Wagner directing all, audience included, in the "Hallelujah Chorus" from *Messiah*.

—Jerome S. Kleinsasser

Report from Italy

Como — The 15th annual "Autunno Musicale" to take place in this beautiful Northern Italian lake town got under way with the first performance in modern times of Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's "dramma sacro," *Li prodigi della divina grazia nella conversione e morte di San Guglielmo duca di Aquitania*, first presented in the monastery of San Agnello Maggiore of Naples in 1731 by students of the Conservatorio dei Poveri di Gesù Cristo from which Pergolesi, at the age of twenty-one, was just graduating. It was a tradition at the Conservatorio dei Poveri to give advanced students a chance to make a prestigious public debut with a setting of a three-act "dramma sacro" to music in which religious themes were juxtaposed with *buffo* scenes characteristic of Neapolitan opera, thus giving rise to some curious hybrids. This was quickly realized with *Li prodigi*, which was reworked before 1735, not by Pergolesi, and ultimately reshaped into the form of an oratorio which was sung in the Congregatione dell'Oratorio of Rome in 1742 and then promptly forgotten. The version heard in the venerable Basilica di San Carpoforo (which traces its history back to the fourth century) was prepared by Guido Salvetti from a manuscript of *Li prodigi* located in the Biblioteca San Pietro a Majella in Naples. There is no question about the basic authenticity of the work — Pergolesi did compose it. But just how much the 1731 version was altered by an anonymous contemporary hand after his premature death in 1736 is unknown, and despite the recovery of some genuinely lovely arias, I very much doubt if the Salvetti version will succeed in bringing the whole work back into the repertory.

The idea of the "dramma sacro" was to combine edification with amusement, and to that end, *Li prodigi* includes as characters, in addition to two saints (in three acts), an angel, and the devil, one Capitano Cuosemo, a *buffo* basso who sings throughout in the Neapolitan dialect. The Capitano's contribution to the evening's

entertainment is plainly a precursor of the coarse comedy that was to characterize Neapolitan opera of that proximate period, but neither it nor some marvelous *bel canto* arias suffice to rescue the work. The long and complicated libretto by one Ignazio Maria Mancini detailing the religious adventures of the Duke of Aquitaine is of no possible interest to a modern audience, and overburdens the work with endless *recitativo secco*.

Appropriately enough, the orchestra was comprised of conservatory students from the Guildhall School in London, and conductor Bruno Campanella had his hands full in achieving respectable sound from the youngsters, especially from the strings. All of the soloists were first-rate professionals. Especially noteworthy were tenor Carlo Gaifa of the Teatro alla Scala as one of the saints, soprano Chu Tai-Li as the angel, and basso Armando Caforio as Capitano Cuosemo. The basilica was filled to overflowing with an enthusiastic and, for the most part, youthful audience.

A word about the Como Festival, which runs each year for more than a month under the direction of Gisella Belgeri and Italo Gomez, may be in order. The hallmark of the programming is unorthodox choice of music, and the range of choice is exceptionally wide and interesting, varying from the presentation of Scottish and Yugoslav folk music through the most recent half-century of English music to sessions devoted to the musical film and contemporary Italian electronic music. It is most certainly one of the most neglected of Europe's autumn musical festivals and an ideal change of pace for those musicians and music-lovers who are tiring of the excessive prices and the standard fare offered in such musical centers as Salzburg, Bayreuth, and Edinburgh.

—Irving Lowens

Report from Switzerland

Zürich — Switzerland recently observed two anniversaries of one of its most distinguished composers: Willy Burkhard. A rich and many-sided life work was terminated all too early; the year that would have marked Burkhard's eightieth birthday also marked the twenty-fifth return of his death date. His name will always be among the first to characterize Switzerland's important contribution to the musical scene between the two World Wars. It was a period largely guided by the exciting discoveries of forgotten Baroque works and the signifi-

cant growth of fine amateur ensembles for whom many a prominent composer wrote new works. The fact that this development lost some of its momentum after the Second World War is due to various reasons, the most weighty of them being the growing complexity of compositional means and the growing demands placed upon the choral singer.

It is with reference to this situation that Burkhard's creative personality gains special stature. He has been called a neo-classicist, and he himself has often pointed out the decisive influence that the great choral masters of the past — he mentions Josquin, Hassler, Lechner, but above all, Bach — have exerted on his work.

The chorale assumes a central role in the composer's writing — not only in his sacred and vocal works but also in his secular and instrumental music. Chorale-like melodies appear especially in the works of his middle and later years; often they assume the function of an initial theme from which further material is derived; in other cases they form a conclusion, at times with a climactic, crowning effect that seems to summarize the essence of his composing: *Soli deo gloria.*

Burkhard attended the normal school of the Seminary Muristalden before he entered teacher's training. He referred to himself later as a "revolutionary seminarist" who fought a constant inner struggle with dogmatic ties. Without the thorough knowledge of the Scriptures that he acquired in those years and without the numerous heated theological arguments in which he was involved, his oratorio *Das Gesicht des Jesajas* (The Vision of Isaiah) — as he himself states — would never have been written. This work stands out among a number of choral works by the composer (oratorios *Das Jahr,* 1941; *Die Sintflut,* 1956; cantatas and smaller works), and it may be considered one of the major contributions to the modern oratorio repertoire.

In an autobiographical sketch published in 1944, Burkhard relates that he searched many years for a text suited to a choral work of larger proportions, and says:

> Suddenly I came upon a surprise. Reading again the prophecies of Isaiah, I saw the road clearly before me. The essential ideas of the text — destruction of falseness and decadence, trust in the power of regeneration, vision of a new order — were the spiritual salvation of the prophet's era; were they not applicable in equal measure to our time?

The work was begun in 1933, shortly before the onset of a serious illness that incapacitated the composer for years. It was given its first performance in 1936 under the direction of Paul Sacher, distinguished Swiss conductor and patron of the arts, who again and again championed the cause of Burkhard's work in performances throughout Europe.

As a memorial tribute to the composer, the work was recently revived by Zürich's *Ars Cantata*; under the direction of Peter Scheuch, and with Katrin Graf, Kurt Huber, and Kurt Widmer as soloists, the performance was as brilliant as it was convincing.

Neo-classicism? Burkhard's tendencies towards formal discipline, his ostinati, his cantus firmus technique, are never empty gestures. Fugue stands as an intellectual principle in his work — a principle of timeless validity. A child of the twentieth century, Burkard did not fail to take an interest in the structural implications of twelve-tone music, which he considered the most significant phase in the history of chromaticism. "It must be stressed," wrote one of his students,[1]

> ... that Burkhard never ceased to keep an open mind towards any of our avant-garde tendencies and experiments. His genuine interest was involved, although he maintained an equally steady critical attitude towards the dogma of unlimited progress. Founded in his religious belief was a deep trust in that continuity of art which merges tradition with the best forces of the ever-new.

—Viktoria Haefer

[1]Klaus Huber, in a letter to the Burkhard biographer Ernst Mohr, dated January 10, 1956.

Recent Records

HANDEL: *Laudate Pueri; Nisi Dominus; Salve Regina.* Deller Consort and Choirs, the King's Musick, Mark Deller. Harmonia Mundi HM 1054 stereo (Brilly Imports, 155 N. San Vincente Blvd., Beverly Hills, CA 90211).

France's Harmonia Mundi label, imported by Brilly of California, offers incongruously a series of wholly British recordings. Indeed, some of the best British music making now comes to us via various French labels.

This, for those who remember the famed Deller Consort with Alfred Deller, countertenor, is Deller II; Mark is the son (and in his youth he made superb duet recordings of Purcell with his father). The older (Alfred) Deller recordings are still widely extant in reissues, so confusion is bound to be natural.

The music here is earliest Handel, composed to Latin texts in Italy when he was scarcely into his twenties. The mystery is that it seems to have been performed in the most Catholic of places — St. John's Lateran — though Handel was no Catholic at all.[1] Some special occasion and a special dispensation. The sound is Handel, all right, but far closer to the familiar music of Vivaldi and Alessandro Scarlatti, not to mention Bach, than to the Handel of *Messiah.* It is rugged, masculine music, full of elaborate runs and ornament, the texture appropriately thick in the Italian manner. The chorus numbers are vigorous and densely written but — being Handel — never weighty. Even at such an early age! The solo parts are extremely florid, rivalling those of Scarlatti; these British soloists wrestle manfully (and womanfully) but can just about keep afloat in the sea of rapid sixteenth notes. Clearly, vocal technique in those times was, as they say, something else again.

A curious recording, poorly balanced. The orchestra (The King's Musick) is, unusually, too far away in the background, whereas the chorus is loud and expansively close. One soprano is much too close

[1]Cf. p. 3

and loud (Rosemary Hardy); the other is farther back and the sound of her voice better balanced (Honor Sheppard). Was the recording made at a concert? This often happens under concert conditions, but there is no discernible audience sound.

This is no hooty British church choir; it is a strong-voiced modern urban-type chorus with solid trained voices and not much blend, but it has vigor and accuracy and copes with the florid textures quite adequately. All in all, you will find this early Handel composing in Latin very much the same man as the more familiar older composer of British oratorio.

ORLANDO GIBBONS: *Anthems and Songs of Praise.* (Church Music of Jacobean England, Vol. II). The Clerkes of Oxenford, David Wulstan. Nonesuch H-71391 stereo.

GLORIA PATRI: *Till Herrens Ära!* Västerås Domkyrkas Gosskör, Samuelson. Proprius PROP 7831 stereo (AudioSource, 1185 Chess Drive, Foster City, CA 94404).

Two opposites here: The first record is top-rank choral music, sung with anaemia; the second is solidly conventional, practical modern, sung with remarkable verve.

Orlando Gibbons is one of the great connective-tissue composers of England, a man who died young, whose music ties together that of Tallis and Byrd, the earliest Anglican composers of note, and the later music of Henry Purcell, well on the way to Handel. Those who have tried Gibbons know his fascination — also his remarkable turgidity; such a thickness of counterpoint and oddly dissonant Jacobean harmony! He is not an easy composer to get across in modern practice, and yet singers, in the end, are always absorbed by his power, which would rank with that of Byrd if he had lived longer. This is the borderline between the English equivalents of Renaissance and Baroque.

The Clerkes of Oxenford are totally British, needless to say. The pure, hooty trebles (named Jane, Sally, Rachel and Mary, as well as Michael and Hilary), the thin-toned hooty countertenors, the vibrato-less basses, all singing with that air of sanctimonious perfection that is the soul of the ancient English church practice, as heard in a thousand Anglican choirs for centuries since Queen Elizabeth I. These perfectionists sing Gibbons with the bluest of blue blood, beautifully, serenely, with perfect pitch and blend and phrasing. And yet, in this case, as noted above, the result is anaemic. By the time you have reached through side 2, you will be bored.

What trouble? It is not easy to say. There is a plodding sameness to the tempo — the same tempo from one piece to the next and the next, always slow, dignified, relentless. There is no give, no vibrancy, no room for natural breathing at the ends of phrases. The singers, chorus and solo (with consort of viols), are dragged politely along in this bloodless rhythm; it is *not* Gibbons, who has far more innate energy and power than is here revealed. One must fault the director, for lack of any better target. He is an interesting and thorough musicologist and writes persuasively on the problems found in diverging Gibbons sources, some of them right on the spot, a five minutes' walk away. Is it the too-well-known musicological tendency to conduct in didactic fashion? Probably. One cannot really fault the singers for sounding so very British — that is their privilege! But rhythm, dynamic phrasing, imagination, is something universal in music and it is missing here.

The unusual choral record from Sweden is one of many such now available via import firms in the United States. (Brilly Imports is another notable outlet, in particular for Harmonia Mundi of France.) No translations into English, and as usual I am at a loss to tell which words are Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, to match the various local composers (also Finnish). While visiting in Norway I once watched a three-way classical music quiz between the three Scandinavian countries in which three teams amiably conversed, each in its own language, with no problems at all! That is what you will find here. In contrast to the English singers above, these are both young and vigorous, a really splendid and healthy musical sound, more adult than the photo of the choir would indicate. The music is indigenous church contemporary, except for two rather lovely items by Grieg with baritone solo (in Norwegian?). None of it is "great" music, surely; but none is really low-brow, except for several items of a Catholic nature by Otto Olsson, which I found on the corny side, though pleasant to hear. The works vary gently from Tyrolese folksiness to neo-Bach counterpoint and there is even a hint, here and there, of extreme dissonance, such as minor seventh chords. One composer, Bernhard Lewkovitch, has been listening to Carl Orff; he writes repeated modal figurations of a very Orffish sort, quite nicely.

What matters in this recording is that, whatever the music, it is sung well, with good dynamics, feeling, expressiveness, plenty of flexibility and a lot of enthusiasm. I would think that choral people out in the Dakotas and other Scandinavian-populated regions of our country should find this an excellent look-see, and listen, into the current musical scene in the home countries.

RICHARD YARDUMIAN: A New Mass in English, *Come Creator Spirit.* Lili Chookasian, mezzo, Members Fordham University Glee Club; Thomas More College Women's Chorale; Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia Chorale, Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia, Brusilow. CRI 430 stereo.

This Yardumian Mass out of Philadelphia was premiered in 1967 and recorded at the time for RCA; typically, it was soon discontinued and CRI (Composers Recordings) has taken the recording up again as part of a laudable series of reissues of noteworthy contemporary music.

Contemporary is not exactly the word I would choose for this massive, heavyweight piece, designed as a newly "practical" Mass according to the 1963 changeover to the vernacular from the traditional Latin text. The Yardumian style is elephantine neo-Romantic with strong elements of what might seem irrelevant colorations — notably that eloquently dismal Armenian heritage of deep, dark, Eastern melody that is familiar in the works of other Armenian-Americans and seems, inherently, to relate as much to the similar chant of the ancient Hebrew tradition. Neither has much to do, one would think, with Catholicism and the Mass! No matter, I suppose.

Also, Yardumian's idiom is relentlessly pre-war modal, a style that was the newest thing in American choral music when I was a college student in the early Thirties. It harps on the minor mode with raised sixth — the Dorian, technically speaking — and the chords are relentlessly built on minor sevenths and ninths until the sound is enough to drive you nuts. Too much! And though Yardumian certainly has a talent for grand effects, he seems to lack any sense of dramatic continuity; there is no contrast, no tautness, just more and more of the same, always slow and poignant — that is, many segments would be poignant if there weren't so many others the same.

I would say that this Mass is about as "practical" for Sunday Mass in church as the Beethoven *Missa Solemnis.* But if you want a grand work, here it is. Available through Elkan-Vogel, Inc.

—Edward Tatnall Canby

Recent Scores

The scores listed below were selected from material received by the editor of this column. Single copies are available for perusal from THE AMERICAN CHORAL FOUNDATION'S *reference library at 130 West 56th Street, New York, New York 10019.*

ARCADELT, JACQUES. *Margot labouréz les vignes.* Edited by Paul C. Echols. SATB. McAfee Music Corp., N.Y. (10 p., .55)

BACH, JOHANN SEBASTIAN. *Prepare Thyself, Zion* (from the *Christmas Oratorio*). Arranged by Douglas E. Wagner. SAB, organ. Harold Flammer (Shawnee Press, Delaware Water Gap, Pa.). (6 p., .40)

BINKERD, GORDON. *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen (Now Blooms a Rose so Tender).* Adapted from the Johannes Brahms Chorale Prelude (Op. 122, No. 8) based on the Michael Praetorius chorale. SATB. Boosey & Hawkes, N.Y. (7 p., .50)

____ . *Two Salieri Canons.* Originals by Salieri arranged by Binkerd. I. *Milton* (TTB). II. *Das Glockenspiel* (TB, Bell-lyra). Boosey & Hawkes, N.Y. (11 p., .65)

BRUMEL, ANTOINE. *Tous les regretz.* Edited by Paul C. Echols. SATB. McAfee Music Corp., N.Y. (8 p., .50)

BUCK, DENNIS. *Disco Concerto.* Based on Grieg's Piano Concerto. SATB, piano, optional bass, drums. McAfee Music Corp., N.Y. (16 p., .60)

CANTATE DOMINO. An ecumenical hymn book published on behalf of the World Council of Churches. Bärenreiter. BA 4994 (380 p., DM 19.-)

CIKKER, JÁN *Drei slowakische Volkslieder.* (Three Slovak Folksongs). TTTBBB Bärenreiter. BA 4988 (24 p., DM 10.-)

DEISS, LUCIEN. *Gloria al Señor.* 38 canciónes y aclamaciónes bíblicas. World Library, Chicago, Ill. (64 p., no price given)

ELRICH, DWIGHT. *Festival Piece on Sine Nomine.* Tune: *Sine Nomine* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. SATB, organ or piano, optional brass (3 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, optional French horns). Shawnee Press, Delaware Water Gap, Pa. (8 p., .50; brass parts available separately)

GIBBONS, ORLANDO. *Holy Ghost, with Light Divine.* Setting by Theodore Beck. SA, recorders or organ. Concordia, St. Louis, Mo. (4 p., .35)

HARVEY, JONATHAN. *I Love the Lord.* SSAATTBB. Novello, Kent, England. (12 p., 1.05)

HASSLER, HANS LEO. *Oh, Praise the Lord.* Edited and arranged by Jerrold Fisher. 2 SATB choruses with optional brass, or one SATB chorus with brass. Brass choir I: 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba; brass choir II: 1 trumpet, 2 horns, 1 trombone. Harold Flammer (Shawnee Press, Delaware Water Gap, Pa.). (score 16 p., .55; brass parts 4.50)

MAW, NICHOLAS. *Reverdie.* Five songs for male voices (TTBarBB). Boosey & Hawkes, N.Y. (34 p., no price given)

MENDELSSOHN, FELIX. *Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten.* Cantata for sop-

rano, SATB, and strings (Organ ad lib). Bärenreiter. BA 19312 (32 p., DM 15.-)

MILLER, CARL S. *Canciones de los Niños* (Four Latin-American Children's Songs). SA, piano, optional flute, percussion (4 players), guitar. Spanish and English texts. Shawnee Press, Delaware Water Gap, Pa. (score 23 p., .75; set of percussion, flute, and guitar parts 4.00)

MORLEY, THOMAS. *Nolo mortem peccatoris.* Edited by Gwilym Beechey. Motet for SATB. Novello, Kent, England. (8 p., .80)

MUSGRAVE, THEA. *Rorate Coeli.* Words (in Latin and English) by William Dunbar. SATB. Novello, Kent, England. (41 p., 4.90)

PELOQUIN, ALEXANDER. *The Promised Land; Missa Memorialis.* For cantor, congregation, SATB, organ, optional orchestra. G.I.A. Publications, Chicago, Ill. (organ score 120 p., 4.50; congregation card .40; orchestra score and parts 25.00)

RINGWALD, ROY, arr. *His Eye Is On the Sparrow.* Music by Charles Gabriel. S solo, SATB, piano or organ. GlorySound (Shawnee Press, Delaware Water Gap, Pa.). (10 p., .50)

SCHULTZ, ROBERT, arr. *Two Christmas Carols with Synthesizer Accompaniment. Masters In This Hall* (SATB), and *On This Day Earth Shall Ring* (Unison voices). Concordia, St. Louis, Mo. (7 p., .55; synthesizer tape accompaniment available from publisher)

SCHÜTZ, HEINRICH. *Jesu dulcissime.* Motet for six voices. Bärenreiter. BA 6228 (23 p., DM 7.-)

——. *Kleiner Liedpsalter.* SATB. Bärenreiter. BA 6231 (32 p., DM 7.-)

SMITH, ROBERT. *Music.* SATB. Roberton Publications, Bucks, England. (8 p., 18 pence)

SPRUCHMOTETTEN III. Motets by Johann Christenius, Wolfgang Carl Briegel, Andreas Raselius, Anton Scandellus, Gallus Dressler. SSAATB. Bärenreiter. BA 6229 (32 p., DM 7.-)

SWEELINCK, JAN PIETERSZOON. *Laudate Dominum (O Praise the Lord Our God).* Edited by Donald Colton. SSATB. Concordia, St. Louis, Mo.

—Richard Jackson

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