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Sim Shalom

GRANT PEACE –Holiday Music from Around the World

Sim Shalom

December 2021

Ryan Phillips, Conductor
Woan Ching Lim, Pianist

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year.....*arr. Mark Brymer*

Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind.....*John Rutter (1945-)*

From A Ceremony of Carols.....*Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)*

**Balulalow
Deo Gracias**

Rebecca Foreman, Harp

Don Oíche Úd i mBeithil.....*arr. David Mooney (1964)*

Rebecca Foreman, Harp

*Don oíche úd i mBeithil
beidh tagairt faoi ghrian go brách,
Don oíche úd i mBeithil
go dtainig an Briathar slán;
Tá gríosghrua ar spéartha
's an talamb'na chlúdach bán;
Féach Iosagán sa chliabhán,
's an mhaighdean in aoibhneas grá.
Ar leacha loma sléibhe
'sé ghlacann na haoirí scáth,
Ar oscailt gheal na spéire
tá teachtaire Dé ar fáil,
Céad glóir' anois don Athair
i bhflaitheasaibh thuas go hárd,
Is feasta fós ar talamb
do fhearaibh deamhén' síocháin.*

Translation:

I sing of a night in Bethlehem
a night as bright as the dawn,
I sing of a night in Bethlehem
the night the Word was born.
The skies are gaily glowing
the earth is covered in white;
See Jesus in the manger,
deep in his mother's breast.
And there on the lonely mountainside
The shepherds bow down in fear,
When the heavens open brightly
and God's message rings out clear,
Glory now to the Father
and all the heavens on high,
And peace to all people
on earth below.

The Wexford Carol.....*arr. Matthew Culloton (1976-)*

Quem vidistis pastores dicite.....*Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)*

*Quem vidistis pastores dicite,
annuntiate nobis in terris quis apparuit?
Natum vidimus et chorus angelorum
collaudantes Dominum. Alleluia.*

*Dicite quidnam vidistis?
et annuntiate Christi nativitatem.
Natum vidimus et chorus angelorum
collaudantes Dominum, Alleluia.*

Translation:

Whom did you see, shepherds,
say, tell us who has appeared?
We saw the child new-born and choirs of angels
praising the Lord, alleluia.

Pray say, what did you see?
And tell us of Christ's nativity.
We saw the child new-born and choirs of angels
praising the Lord, alleluia.

Quem vidistis pastores.....*Cipriano de Rore (1515-1565)*

Gesù Bambino.....*Pietro Yon (1886-1943)*

————— INTERMISSION —————

Esta Noche.....*arr. Tom Cunningham (1946-)*

*Esta noche nace un Niño
entre la escarcha y el hielo.
Quien pudiera, Niño mío,
vestirte de terciopelo.*

*¡Alegrí(a), Alegrí(a), Alegría,
Alegrí(a), Alegrí(a), y placer!*

*Esta noche nace un Niño
en el portal de Belén.
La Virgen está lavando
con un poco de jabón.
Se le picaron las manos
manos de mi corazón.*

Translation:

Tonight a Child is born
Between the frost and the ice.
My Child, who would be able to
dress you in velvet?

Happiness and delight!

Tonight a Child is born
In a doorway in Bethlehem.
The Virgin is washing
with a little bit of soap.
Her hands sting her,
hands of my heart.

Sim Shalom.....*Jennaya Robison (1974-)*

*Sim shalom tovah uv'rachah
aleinu v'al kol Yisrael amecha.*

Translation:

Grant peace, goodness and blessing
to us and unto all Israel, your people.

Go Tell It On the Mountain.....*arr. Evelyn Simpson-Curenton (1953-)*

Eit barn er født i Betlehem.....*arr. Ørjan Matre (1979-)*

*Eit barn er født i Betlehem.
No frydar seg Jerusalem.
Halleluja.
Her ligg han i eit krubberom,
men rår med evig herredom.
Halleluja.
Men okse der og asen stod,
og såg den Gud og Herre god.
Halleluja.
Tre kongar kom frå Austerland,
gull røykjels myrra gav dei han.
Halleluja.
Ein gong vi vert Vår Herre lik.
Han leier oss til himmelrik.
Halleluja.
Lov takk og pris i æva all.
Treenig Gud det vera skal!
Halleluja!*

Translation:

A child is born in Bethlehem.
And so rejoice, Jerusalem.
Hallelujah.
Here he lies in a manger,
but rules with eternal dominion.
Hallelujah.
There the ox and ass stood,
And saw that he was God.
Hallelujah.
Three kings came from Austerland,
And gave him gold and myrrh.
Hallelujah.
One day we will meet our Lord,
and he will lead us to Heaven.
Hallelujah.
Endless thanks and praise
to the God of all!
Hallelujah!

The Holly and the Ivy.....*arr. Ola Gjeilo (1978-)*

Hlohonolofatsa.....*arr. Dan Jackson*

*Iyo hlohonolofatsa
Zitioom
Ka lebitso la ntate*

Translation:

Bless everything
(nonsense word)
In the name of the Father

Conductor's Corner

– Ryan Phillips

Can we all give one big sigh of relief together? 1, 2, 3 ... sigh. Never before would I have thought that I should not take performing for live audiences for granted. We made some wonderful virtual music during the height of the pandemic, but that performance itch was never quite scratched. What a joy it is to see you all today, about to enjoy the rested and rejuvenated Arizona Repertory Singers!

While at home in my own work and familial bubble, I thought about how important travel is to my life and mental health. Each summer I try to travel abroad, whether it be to the music-laden pubs of Ireland, the historical structures of Machu Picchu, or the biologically brilliant Galapagos Islands. Each new place I visit brings an air of exploration and wonder to my life. I know you feel the same way. Experiencing the world around us is something that truly makes life worth living.

In lieu of hopping on a plane for a getaway in a country that may or may not be locked down, we are here to bring the world to you. During this performance, you'll experience several different languages and travel to even more areas of the world. Each piece has been chosen to offer a contrast from every other that comes before it.

It is our hope to allow you to experience music from around the world in one sitting. Not only for the joy of experiencing it, but also to open your minds to various cultures and musical styles. We are one choir, in one state, in one country. The world is a vast place overflowing with exploration and wonder. Let's experience it together!

Program Notes

– Ryan Phillips

It's the Most Wonderful Time of The Year – arr. Mark Brymer

Prolific composer/arranger Mark Brymer's setting of *It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year* by Eddie Pola and George Wyle spices up a traditional holiday song with upbeat piano accompaniment. This composition was originally made famous by singer Andy Williams in 1963. The playfulness of the season is highlighted with the alternation between the upper and lower voices.

“Balulalow” and “Deo Gracias” – Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Born in Suffolk, England, Benjamin Britten, almost died at the age of 3 due to pneumonia. This greatly weakened his heart and contributed to his death at the age of 63. From a semi-musical family, his father was an orthodontist and his mother an amateur singer, he studied piano and viola at a young age. The Royal College of Music awarded him a scholarship in 1929 and he graduated in 1933. He later worked as a film composer for the BBC, where he composed over forty works in two years. During WWII, Britten traveled to the US and befriended composer Aaron Copland. On the ship home, he composed his *Ceremony of Carols*, from where “Balulalow” and “Deo Gracias” are taken. Originally for boy trebles with harp accompaniment, these two movements are quite different in their construction. “Balulalow” continuously alternates between feelings of 6/8 and 3/4, includes a soprano solo with a hauntingly beautiful melody, and constantly toys with both major and minor tonalities. “Deo Gracias” sports a highly energetic feel with a repeating and catchy chorus using the title's text. Each verse uses lots of text, employed with soft dynamics and staccato markings throughout. Finally, the last rambunctious chorus has three parts repeating the same two-measure phrase in canon with great excitement!

***Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind* – John Rutter (1945-)**

English composer John Rutter is well known for his sacred works. His *Magnificat* with classical-style orchestra (other than the percussion!) is a joyous triumph and his *For the Beauty of the Earth* is frequently performed by both children's and adult choirs. Two years ago, ARS concluded our holiday performance with his *Rejoice and Be Merry*. The text of *Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind* comes from William Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. The text of this piece relates severe winter wind to the bitter realities of humankind. Rutter sets this text to an enchanting melody and employs different vocal and piano accompaniment textures with each verse.

***Don Oíche Úd i mBeithil* – arr. David Mooney (1964-)**

Ireland native, David Mooney, looked no further than his home country for all of his higher education degrees, concluding with a PhD in Musicology. Since 1988, he has taught at Ireland's largest music school, the Conservatory of Music and Drama at the Dublin Institute of Technology where he is the head of keyboard studies. His arrangement of this traditional Irish melody is led by a solo voice singing in Irish, accompanied by choir, only on neutral syllables such as hums and "oh," and harp. *Our thanks to Pat Pérez for assistance with pronunciation.*

***The Wexford Carol* – arr. Matthew Culloton (1976-)**

The traditional Irish Christmas carol, *The Wexford Carol*, originates from County Wexford and dates back to medieval times. William Grattan Flood (1859-1928) brought this text to the forefront of Irish Christmas music when he published an arrangement in the Oxford Book of Carols. This setting, by Minnesota composer and arranger Matthew Culloton, stands out among an abundant number of choral arrangements that exist today. In it, he surrounds the melody with lush harmonies building a neutral-syllable *ritornello* which surrounds each verse. Varying vocal textures differentiate the repeating melody. Contributing to the authentic Irish flare is the use of a major key with a flatted seventh.

Quem vidistis pastores dicite – Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Francis Poulenc is one of the most famous members of Les Six, a group of six young French composers. This group sought the public's recognition for their daring and original compositional styles. The group disbanded while Poulenc was still in his twenties, but he had already gained public praise for his unique harmonies and complex tonal structures.

Much of Poulenc's early works feature secular text, as the composer was not religious at the time. The composer wrote his first sacred work in 1936 when he found faith after the death of fellow composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud and a visit to the sanctuary at Rocamadour. *Quem vidistis pastores dicite* is the second piece in a collection of four Lenten motets, written in 1952. This composition begs the telling of Christ's birth, asking "Whom did you see, shepherds, speak, tell us: on earth, who has appeared?" With Poulenc's signature short phrases, the unifying melody is passed through each voice. Most of the work is calm and serene, though with a dramatic contrast on the text "*dicite quidnam vidistis*." The speaker becomes much more demanding as Poulenc composes a homophonic trumpet fanfare in the choir. The excitement can no longer be contained as the music lifts to a triumphant *fortissimo* at the conclusion of the piece.

Quem vidistis pastores – Cipriano de Rore (1515-1565)

Born in Belgium, composer Cipriano de Rore studied with Adrian Willaert, the founder of the Venetian School (a compositional study), at St. Mark's Basilica in Venice. de Rore gained prominence as a composer through commissions from various noblemen in Venice. In the mid-1540s, he was appointed *maestro di cappella* at the Ferrara court in Italy. Here he experimented with a technique called *soggetto cavato*, where the vowel sounds of a given name or title correspond to specific solfège syllables; this would allow one's name to be sung with particular pitches. He eventually moved back to Venice as Willaert's successor at St. Mark's, though he only stayed for a few years.

Quem vidistis pastores reflects his style of Italian motet composition. The piece is written for seven voices (SAATTBB) in a polyphonic style with no homophony; this requires indefinite concentration from the singers throughout the work. Music from this era employed a strict practice of dissonance, which allowed pure sounding harmonies with no jarring dissonances to interrupt the flow of the music. Like many renaissance motets, de Rore begins this piece in a duple time signature, only to switch to a triple meter in the final section of the piece to represent the Holy Trinity.

***Gesù Bambino* – Pietro Yon (1886-1943)**

Italian composer Pietro Yon was a skilled organist who spent most of his professional life playing in churches, notably as organist at the Vatican. At the age of 21, he was offered a three-year contract to play for St. Francis Xavier Church in Manhattan, which turned into a nineteen-year tenure. In 1926, St. Patrick's Cathedral hired Yon: he would work there until a stroke paralyzed his right side and rendered him unable to play.

Gesù Bambino is one of his most well-known pieces, and is scored for baritone solo, choir, and organ. This recognizable tune features multiple iterations of a descending musical sequence and modulations that drive the melody to unexpected areas. We have chosen to split the solo between two soloists to give an antiphonal feeling to the work. A sense of musical serenity is drawn from the page by the lilting melody, enhanced by vocal accompaniments that feature light intervallic leaps.

***Esta Noche* – arr. Tom Cunningham (1946-)**

This arrangement, adapted from a Spanish carol, brings the fun and joy of the season to our second half. Tom Cunningham sets his choral arrangement in two verses, each with varying accompaniments. Throughout the first verse, bass singers imitate the guitarrón as they vocalize string plucks, while altos and tenors fill in the chord with syncopated rhythms on the text “Alegría.” The second verse separates the treble and bass voices as each section takes half of the verse. Finally, auxiliary percussion joins the piece and brings excitement that pushes to a thrilling finale.

Sim Shalom – Jennaya Robison (1974-)

For many Jewish denominations, the sim shalom prayer is spoken at all prayer services. Jennaya Robison's composition of this prayer for peace is simple in construction, reflecting the uncomplicated nature of the prayer's text. The opening accompaniment shows little rhythmic activity as a deliberate foreshadowing of the delicate and simplistic melody. This tune is featured throughout the entirety of the work, showcased in different choral textures such as simple two-part harmony and canon.

Go Tell It On the Mountain – arr. Evelyn Simpson-Curenton (1953-)

Many different arrangements of this Negro spiritual have been produced in the last few decades, each with its own syncopated flare. In African American composer Evelyn Simpson-Curenton's arrangement, she shares her own take on this well-known melody. While many arrangers start the chorus on the downbeat, she introduces quite a bit of syncopation by starting nearly every other measure on the "and" of beat one. To contrast the excitement of the recognizable chorus, she ushers in peacefulness during the verse; the tempo slows, the choir sings a neutral syllable, and a soulful soloist takes the lead. Finally, one at a time, she stacks multiple melodies on top of each other to build excitement and drive the piece to its celebratory conclusion.

Eit barn er født i Betlehem – arr. Ørjan Matre (1979-)

Originally in Latin, *Puer natus in Bethlehem*, this fourteenth-century hymn text has been set to a variety of tunes, including a German folk tune. Matre's arrangement uses Ludvig Mathias Lindeman's 1871 melody from the city of Vang i Valdres, about four hours northwest of Oslo. This wonderful arrangement features a recurring conclusion to each verse where each vocal section contributes their own melodic material beautifully woven together in an elegant tapestry of sound. Unlike many of our pieces on this program *Eit barn er født i Betlehem* uses nonsense syllables to drive sections that act as a vocal accompaniment; the arranger has given no text during these sections, but only writes "improvised vocal syllables."

***The Holly and the Ivy* – arr. Ola Gjeilo (1978-)**

The melody of this popular Christmas carol was first published in Cecil Sharp's 1911 collection, *English Folk Carols*, though the text dates back to medieval times. The holly plant carries Christian symbolism, often referred to as "Christ's thorn," characterized by the leaves' resemblance to a crown of thorns. The plant's berry represents the blood of Christ. Symbolically, the duality of holly and ivy represent both Christ and Mary.

Norwegian composer Ola Gjeilo's arrangement of this text uses the standard melody, harmonized in many different ways. The first few verses are sung mostly in homophony, with standard harmonizations. Beginning in the third verse, the basses hold an F pedal tone while the altos have the melody. To build contrast, Gjeilo includes a newly composed counter melody that is sung at times by two parts, while the original melody is only sung by one. All three congruent elements (melody, counter melody, and pedal tone) shift between all four voice parts to create varying textures. This piece also features three key changes, but interestingly, they are not eased into as standard musical conventions should suggest. The first two either raise or lower the key by a minor third, while the final change simply raises the key by a whole step.

***Hlobonolofatsa* – arr. Dan Jackson**

This joyous arrangement of a South African greeting song ends our performance on a high note. Soloists freely introduce the main melody while the choir slowly builds energy. Tenor and bass sections introduce rhythmic lines that drive the piece forward, all while accompanied by djembe and other auxiliary percussion. Characteristic of South African pieces, *Hlobonolofatsa* utilizes second-inversion chord planing, which is a compositional technique where the fifth of the chord is in the lowest voice and all voices move in parallel motion.

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Arizona Repertory Singers

P.O. Box 41601

Tucson, Arizona 85717

520.792.8141

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