Program Notes

Our program this afternoon features works spanning seven centuries, with a number of pieces never performed before at Drexel.

It’s common in these types of programs to schedule the pieces chronologically (from earliest music to most recent), but we will start with a piece from the middle of the group—Anton Bruckner’s lovely motet *Locus Iste*. Bruckner lived in the second half of the 19th century and was probably best-known as an organist throughout most of his life. He didn’t begin to have real success as a composer until he was in his fifties, but once he found his voice, he wrote a host of pieces that remain in the repertoire, including 10 symphonies, some symphonic masses and several stunning a cappella motets.

Very few concert choirs do literature from before the late Renaissance (16th century), but we’ve been pushing backwards into the Medieval period over the past few years and we’re taking our deepest push in the way-back machine this year with this isorhythmic motet by composer/theorist Philippe de Vitry, the man who first invented mensural notation in his 14th century treatise “Ars Nova” (“New Music”). As is typical of motets of this period, the composer combines two secular songs in the top two voices with a slow version of a gregorian chant in the lower voices. While it’s practically impossible for modern audiences to follow three independent texts being sung simultaneously, the overall effect is still quite remarkable.

We’ll move forward a couple of centuries to the late Renaissance for our next work, a setting of the hymn *O Magnum Mysterium* by Spanish composer Tomás Luis de Victoria. Victoria was trained in Spain and moved to Rome as an adult to work for a number of years, eventually returning to Spain in the last 25 years of his life where he was widely regarded as the most important composer in the nation. While his music is often compared to that of his contemporary, Palestrina, Victoria’s music is much more overtly emotional and mystical.

An entire school of composition grew up in the late Renaissance around the cathedral of St. Marks in Venice, usually called the polychoral school. This is because the cathedral (a picture of which is on the cover of this program) has a choir loft shaped like a cross, which allows the choir to be split and put on opposite sides of the audience. We are going to do two polychoral works, one for two choirs and the second for four choirs.

The first of the pieces, *Angelus Domini Descendi* (“An angel of the Lord descended from heaven”) by Giovanni Gabrieli, comes from his first book of sacred symphonies (1597). The two choirs are set in same general musical range, sometimes echoing each other and sometimes being combined for a broader sonority.

The second piece, a setting of Psalm 2 by the German composer Heinrich Schütz, is a generation later in the early Baroque period. This piece was part of a collection called the “Psalms of David” (1619). Schütz studied in Venice with Gabrieli, but like most German composers of this period, his music is less contrapuntal and works more with homophonic blocks of sound. This work includes two full-sized “capella” choirs along with two additional solo “favoriti” choirs. This style of using different sized groups came to be known as “concerted” style (small group vs. big group) and moved into instrumental music as concerto grosso and later solo concerto. As is usual in the Baroque period, there is also a figured bass part for the continuo (keyboard).
Program

Locus Iste ........................................................... Anton Bruckner (1824–1896)
Vos Qui Admiramini/Gratissima Virginis ........Philippe de Vitry (1291–1361)
O Magnum Mysterium .........................Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)
Angelus Domini Descendit .................Giovanni Gabrieli (c. 1554/57–1612)
Psalm 2 ...........................................Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)
Psalm 2 ...........................................Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)
Silence & Music ....................................Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)
Five Flower Songs ................................Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)
Chamber Singers

Lux Aeterna ...................................................Morten Lauridsen (1943-    )
Introitus
In Te, Domine, Speravi
O Nata Lux
Veni, Sancte Spiritus
Agnus Dei — Lux Aeterna

University Chorus

Silence & Music ....................................Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)
Five Flower Songs ................................Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)
Chamber Singers

Lux Aeterna ...................................................Morten Lauridsen (1943-    )
Introitus
In Te, Domine, Speravi
O Nata Lux
Veni, Sancte Spiritus
Agnus Dei — Lux Aeterna

Program Notes (continued from back cover)

The Chamber Singers will follow with works by two 20th century British composers. Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten are sometimes lumped together as mid-century tonal composers, but Vaughan Williams was some 40 years older than Britten and the two, while certainly acquainted, were not close. Nor are their styles similar—Vaughan Williams’ music has its roots in the late Romantic period, with strong influences from English folk song and from the English Renaissance period; Britten's music, while essentially tonal, has its roots in the 20th century idiom of Bartok and Hindemith, with highly dissonant harmonies married to tonal melodies.

Silence & Music was written in 1953 for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, and dedicated to one of Vaughan Williams’ composition teachers, Charles Villiers Stanford, and particularly to honor Stanford’s most famous part-song, “the Blue Bird.” The poem is by Vaughan Williams’ wife, Ursula, and compares the change from silence to sound to the change in a landscape from darkness to dawn.

The Five Flower Songs of Benjamin Britten were actually written a couple of years before the Vaughan Williams’ piece, but they are an eclectic mix of styles with dissonant homophony and tonal polyphony throughout. The poems are by different poets and do not share a stylistic point of view, from the lovely and pastoral “Evening Primrose” of 19th century poet John Clare to the rustic and raucous “Ballad of Green Broom,” a tale passed down from antiquity.

The Chorus will return to complete our program with an extended work by the noted California composer Morten Lauridsen. Lauridsen teaches on the faculty of the University of Southern California and has made a name as one of the country’s best choral composers over the past twenty year. Several of his works are now in the repertoire (i.e. getting multiple performances and not just by the commissioning group); today’s piece, Lux Aeterna, was written for the Los Angeles Master Chorale, generally considered the best professional symphonic chorus on the west coast.

Lauridsen said that he was moved to write the work by his mother’s death. He didn’t want to write a traditional requiem mass, and ended up choosing five sacred texts which all deal with eternal light, and shaping the work with bookend text from the opening of the requiem mass. The five movements are sung without a break.

The first movement begins with the requiem text: “Grant them rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.”

The second movement, “In Te, Domine, Speravi” (Lord, I have hoped in you), speaks of a light that has risen in the darkness for the upright.

The a cappella third movement, “O Nata Lux” (Oh light born [from light]) begins with its reference to light.

The fourth movement, “Veni, Sancte Spiritus” (Come, Holy Spirit) also opens with a reference to light: “Come Holy Spirit, Send forth from heaven the ray of their light.”

And finally, in the last movement, Lauridsen completes his work with the Agnus Dei of the requiem mass (“dona eis requiem”—“grant them rest”) and repeats the opening text, and music, from the beginning of the work.
Drexel Chorus
Dr. Steven Powell, director
Brian Dilts, accompanist

Soprano
• Samantha Andrel  .......................................... Music Industry
Elizabeth Brayman  ........................................... Chemistry
Christina DeRusso.............................................. Business Administration
Charlotte DiGiorgio ........................................... Architecture
Victoria Fiorena .............................................. Nursing
Casey Gilfoil .................................................... Biological Sciences
Marianne Gorsky ........................................... TV Production & Media Mgmt
Abbie McGee .............................................. Nursing
Taylor Nolan ..................................................... Psychology
Luisa Palmese ................................................. Chemical Engineering
# Elizabeth Plowman ........................................ Electrical Engineering
Juliana Quazi .................................................. Math
# Johanna Mikitka Simon ................................... Architectural & Civil Engineering
Kayla Speedy ..................................................... Fashion Design
Victoria Tielebein ............................................ Physics
Alexis Wolfer .................................................... Business Administration
Nicole Zusman ................................................. Music Industry

Alto
# Laura Allan ................................................. Materials Sci and Engineering
# Emily Barth .................................................... Chemical Engineering
Katherine Berman .......................................... Biological Sciences
Poonam Bhavsar ........................................... Biological Sciences
# Meghan Cash .............................................. Environmental Engineering
Sydney Douglas ............................................ Business Administration
Cathlene Farnelli .......................................... Architectural Engineering
Emily Fister ..................................................... Biological Sciences
Annia Jasper ..................................................... Music Industry
Jacquelyn Kane ............................................... Business Administration
Emily Lantz ..................................................... Entertainment & Arts Management
Elena Nogara ................................................... Interior Design
• Eryn Park ....................................................... Design & Merchandising
Pritika Ramesh ................................................. Music Industry

Tenor
Michael Aherne ............................................. Digital Media
Joshua Cohen ................................................ Civil Engineering
Vincent DeGrandchamp ....................................... Biological Sciences
Brad DeLeone ................................................ Graphic Design

Dr. Steven Powell, director
Brian Dilts, accompanist

Soprano
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Christina DeRusso.............................................. Business Administration
Charlotte DiGiorgio ........................................... Architecture
Victoria Fiorena .............................................. Nursing
Casey Gilfoil .................................................... Biological Sciences
Marianne Gorsky ........................................... TV Production & Media Mgmt
Abbie McGee .............................................. Nursing
Taylor Nolan ..................................................... Psychology
Luisa Palmese ................................................. Chemical Engineering
# Elizabeth Plowman ........................................ Electrical Engineering
Juliana Quazi .................................................. Math
# Johanna Mikitka Simon ................................... Architectural & Civil Engineering
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Chamber Singers

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*Victoria Fiorenza*
*Victoria Tielebein*
*Alexis Wolfer*

**Alto**
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*Emily Barth*
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*Pritika Ramesh*

**Tenor**
*Vincent DeGrandchamp*
*Doug McCaskey*
*Connor Quigley*
*Brett Rodgers*

**Bass**
*Corey Federowich*
*Matthew Prusinski*
*Jonathan Shoup*
*Ted Swanson*
*Michael Zimmermann*

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