

## PROGRAM NOTES

by Linda Russell

### Totus tuus, Op. 60

Henryk Mikolaj Górecki (1933-2010)

Son of amateur musicians but discouraged from developing his musical gifts, composer Henryk Mikolaj Górecki persevered and became a leading figure of avant-garde music in post-Stalin Poland. Serialism and its resulting dissonance characterized his early music, but he turned to a more romantic sacred minimalism in the mid-1970s. Górecki composed *Totus Tuus, Op. 60* in 1987 for the third visit of Pope John Paul II to his homeland. The text begins with a phrase the pope himself coined after surviving an assassination attempt, believing that Mary herself had delivered him: *Totus tuus sum, Maria* (I am completely yours, Mary). The remainder is from a poem by Maria Boguslawska. The music with its exquisite harmonies is based on chants of the Polish Catholic Church and reflects Górecki's deep love of his country and its musical traditions.

#### Górecki on music:

I think that music is one of the domains that people really need, and its importance only depends on whether one knows how to receive it. Every person needs to be prepared to know how to “use” music. Not only music—also literature, painting, sculpture, and film. . . Tarkowski said that art is prayer. It is something that I also emphasize. But it is difficult to understand: one has to mature to this thought. It seems to many people that prayer means to “recite the Hail Mary”—but someone may recite Hail Mary as many times as one wants and it may not be prayer.

Maria,  
Totus Tuus sum, Maria,  
Mater nostri Redemptoris,  
Virgo Dei, Virgo pia,  
Mater mundi Salvatoris.  
Totus Tuus sum, Maria!

Mary,  
I am completely yours, Mary,  
Mother of our Redeemer.  
Virgin Mother of God, blessed virgin,  
Mother of the world's Savior.  
I am completely yours, Mary!

### Te lucis ante terminum

Jonathan David

New Yorker Jonathan David currently resides in Chapel Hill, NC. In 2015 ChoralArt Camerata premiered his setting of *All My Heart This Night Rejoices*, winner of the 2015 New England Carol Contest. His music is described as “fierce, ecstatic, romantic, sophisticated, and accessible.” ([johanthandavidmusic.com](http://johanthandavidmusic.com)) The Duke Vespers Ensemble commissioned *David* in 2014; his text, *Te lucis ante terminum*, is a seventh-century Ambrosian hymn for Compline (the service at the end of the day). The setting is chant-like with its multi-meters, and his harmonies are contemporary.

Te lucis ante terminum,  
rerum Creator, poscimus,  
ut solita clementia,  
sis praesul et custodiam.

Te corda nostra somniant,  
Te per soporem sentiant,  
tuamque semper gloriam  
vicina luce concinant.

Vitam salubrem tribue,  
nostrum calorem refice,  
taetram noctic caliginem  
tua coluustret claritas.

Praesta, Pater omnipotens,  
per Iesum Christum Dominum,,  
qui tecum in perpetuum  
regnat cum Sancto Spiritu, Amen.

Before the end of light,  
Creator of all things,  
we ask that with your customary clemency  
you might be guardian of our safety.

May our hearts dream of you;  
may they feel you in their sleep;  
and may they ever sing your glory  
by the coming light.

Grant us healthful life;  
restore our ardor;  
may your brightness illuminate  
the foul gloom of night.

Grant this, almighty Father,  
through Jesus Christ the Lord,  
who reigns with you  
and the Holy spirit forever. Amen

## **Rorate caeli desuper**

**Leo Nestor**

Conductor, composer, professor and organist Leo Nestor is founder, conductor and artistic director of the American Repertory Singers, a professional vocal ensemble in Washington, D.C. Since 2001 he has been director of choral activities and director of graduate studies in liturgical music at The Catholic University of America. *Rorate caeli desuper* is the first motet in Nestor's *Four Motets on Plainsong Themes*. Nestor sets the text of Isaiah 45:8, an antiphon sung during Advent. Nestor notes "No composer of works in this genre could fail to acknowledge the seminal influence of the chant-based works of Maurice Duruflé, nor to fail to address the debt with gratitude."

*Rorate, caeli, desuper, et nubes pluant justum;*

Ne irascaris Domine, ne ultra memineris iniquitatem.  
Ecce civitas Sancta facta est deserta:  
Sion deserta facta est: Jerusalem desolata facta est:  
Domus sanctificationis tuae et gloriae tuae,  
ubi laudaverunt te patres nostri. *Rorate*

Vide Domine, afflictionem populi tui,  
et mitte quem missurus es:  
emitte Agnum, dominatorem terrae,  
de Petra deserti ad montem filiae Sion:  
ut auferat ipse jugum captivitatis nostrae. *Rorate*

Consolamini, consolamini, popule meus: cito veniet salus tua:  
quare moerore consumeris? Quia innovavit te dolor?  
Salvabo te, noli timere. Ego enim sum Dominus Deus tuus,  
Sanctus Israel, Redemptor tuus. *Rorate*

*Ye heavens open from above, that clouds may rain the Just One.*

Do not be angry, Lord our God! No longer be mindful of our past offenses.  
See how Zion, thy city, now has been deserted.  
Jerusalem now is left abandoned:  
This is the holy mountain of your presence and place of your glory.  
Our fathers did sing your praise.

See, O Lord our God, the great affliction of your people,  
and send down Him who is to come:  
send forth the Chosen, send forth the Lamb to save us;  
the rock in the desert visits the daughters of Zion:  
that he may bring rescue, freeing us from the yoke of captivity.

Be ye comforted Israel my people: quickly he will come, your salvation.  
Why this sorrowing? Why sadness, pain to you?  
Your Savior comes: do not be fearful. I am always your Lord God and your Savior:  
Holy. And your Redeemer.

## **Northern Lights**

**Ēriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977)**

Ēriks Ešenvalds received a Masters degree in composition from the Latvian Academy of Music. From 2011-13 he was a Fellow Commoner at Trinity College, Cambridge. He teaches composition at the Latvian Academy of Music. Ensembles around the world commission and perform Ešenvalds' music, and in choral circles he is one of the world's most admired composers.

In *Northern Lights* Ešenvalds combines a Latvian folk tune (sung by a tenor) with a choral setting of a text describing the experience of seeing the Aurora Borealis. Latvian folklore believes the Northern Lights to be the restless spirits of fallen warriors still fighting in the sky. The English text is from the journals of two nineteenth-century Arctic explorers, Charles Francis Hall and Fridtjof Nansen. Ešenvalds enhances the mystery of this natural phenomenon by using tuned glasses and chimes.

Cik naksnīnas pret ziemeļi  
Ē redzēj' kāvus karojam;  
Karo kāvi pie debesu,  
Ē vedīs karus mūs' zemē.

Whenever at night, far in the north  
I saw the kāvi soldiers (i.e. Northern Lights) having their battle,  
having their battle up in the sky;  
perhaps they might bring a war to my land, too.

It was night, and I had gone on deck several times.  
Iceberg was silent; I too was silent.  
It was true dark and cold.  
At nine o'clock I was below in my cabin,  
when the captain hailed me with the words:  
'Come above, Hall, at once! The world is on fire!'  
I knew his meaning, and, quick as thought,  
I rushed to the companion stairs.  
In a moment I reached the deck,  
and as the cabin door swung open,  
a dazzling light, overpowering light burst upon my startled senses!

Oh, the whole sky was one glowing mass of coloured flames, so mighty, so brave!  
Like a pathway of light the Northern Lights seemed to draw us into the sky.  
Yes, it was harp-music, wild storming in the darkness;  
the strings trembled and sparkled in the glow of the flames  
like a shower of fiery darts.  
A fiery crown of auroral light cast a warm glow across the arctic ice.  
Again at times it was like softly playing, gently rocking silvery waves,  
on which dreams travel into unknown worlds.

### **Sure on this Shining Night**

**Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)**

Morten Lauridsen, a longtime professor in the composition department at the University of Southern California School of Music and former composer-in-residence for the Los Angeles Master Chorale, is one of America's most-performed modern choral composers. In 2007, he was the recipient of the National Medal of Arts from the President in a White House ceremony "for his composition of radiant choral works combining musical beauty, power and spiritual depth that have thrilled audiences worldwide."

Lauridsen set three twentieth-century texts about night and romantic love for *Nocturnes* (2005): "Sa Nuit d'Ète" by Rilke, "Soneto de la Noche" by Neruda, and "Sure on This Shining Night" by James Agee. In "Sure on This Shining Night" "the luminous sonorities of the piano surround the intertwining voices with a halo of mellow resonance." (Adams)

Sure on this shining night  
Of star-made shadows round  
Kindness must watch for me  
This side the ground

The late year lies down the north,  
All is headed, all is health

High summer holds the earth,  
Hearts all whole

Sure on this shining night  
I weep for wonder  
Wandr'ing far alone  
Of shadows on the stars.

## **O salutaris hostia**

**Ēriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977)**

*O Salutaris Hostia*, Ešenvalds' setting of Aquinas' Hymn to the Blessed Sacrament for the feast of Corpus Christi, intertwines two soprano soloists in a gentle meditation above the hushed full choir. Originally composed for female voices, this version for full choir is one of his most popular compositions. "The effect is quietly ecstatic, a brief moment of adoration and wonderment." (Gabriel Jackson)

O salutaris Hostia  
Quae caeli pandis ostium.  
Bella premunt hostilia;  
Da robur, fer auxilium.

Uni trinoque Domino  
Sit sempiterna gloria:  
Qui vitam sine termino,  
Nobis donet in patria. Amen.

O Redeeming Sacrifice,  
(You) who opens the gate of heaven  
Enemies threaten wars;  
Give us strength, send aid.

To the Triune Lord  
May there be everlasting glory  
That life without end  
He gives to us in our homeland. Amen.

## **A Simple Song**

**Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)**

American composer, conductor, author, lecturer, and pianist, Leonard Bernstein was for many years music director of the New York Philharmonic. "A Simple Song" is from *Mass*, a theater piece composed with texts by Bernstein and Stephen Schwartz. Commissioned by Jacqueline Kennedy, *Mass* premiered in 1971 as part of the opening of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. In sympathy with the upheaval of the early 1970s, *Mass* questions authority and cries for peace. With "A Simple Song" we feel a catharsis, a respite from the tumult and a return to a simple faith.

Sing God a simple song: lauda laude.  
Make it up as you go along: lauda laude.  
Sing like you like to sing.  
God loves all simple simple things,  
For God is the simplest of all.

I will sing the Lord a new song  
To praise him, to bless him, to bless the Lord.  
I will sing his praises while I live all of my days.  
Blessed is the man who loves the Lord,  
Blessed is the man who praises Him. lauda lauda laude.  
And walks in His ways.  
I will lift up my eyes  
To the hills from whence comes my help.  
I will lift up my voice to the Lord  
Singing lauda laude.  
For the Lord is my shade,  
Is the shade above my right hand,  
And the sun shall not smite me by day  
Nor the Moon by night.  
Blessed is the man who loves the Lord, lauda lauda laude,  
And walks in His ways.  
Lauda lauda laude.  
All of my days.

### **This will be our reply to violence**

**Aaron Robinson (b. 1970)**

American composer Aaron Robinson has written for television, film and stage. Living on the coast of Maine with his wife and son, Robinson composed *This Will Be Our Reply to Violence* in response to the terrorist attacks of November 2015 in Paris and Saint-Denis. Bernstein's text is from an address (1963) following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. From "An Artist's Response to Violence," one line stands out: "This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before." Bernstein presented this address to assuage the fears and unrest of those gathered on a Monday evening for the United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York at Madison Square Garden. Since then it has become universal in its message and timeless in its ability to evoke strength and provide comfort during times of unspeakable tragedy. The choral setting is dedicated to Vox Nova Chamber Choir, who premiered it in June 2017 under the direction of Shannon Chase. It is the first musical setting of Bernstein's words by a composer; the Leonard Bernstein Estate in New York City gave Robinson exclusive rights for this performance by ChoralArt.

### **O magnum mysterium**

**Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943)**

Lauridsen writes, "For centuries, composers have been inspired by this beautiful text, with its juxtaposition of the birth of the newborn King amongst the lowly animals and shepherds. This affirmation of God's grace to the meek and the adoration of the Blessed Virgin are celebrated in my setting through a quiet song of profound inner joy."

O magnum mysterium, et admirabile sacramentum,  
Ut animalia viderent Dominum  
Natum, jacentum in praesepe!  
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera  
Meruerunt portare  
Dominum Christum. Alleluia!

O great mystery and wondrous sacrament,

That animals should see the Lord born  
And lying in a manger.  
O blessed virgin, whose womb  
was worthy to bear  
the Lord Christ. Alleluia!

## A Christmas Carol

Deanna Witkowski

Witkowski received a M.A. in jazz piano performance from the City College of New York. She has been a guest on Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz* and produced six albums of her music. She is a frequent presenter on jazz and spirituality; her music includes 80 sacred music originals and arrangements. Witkowski is the winner of the 2017 ChoralArt New England Carol Contest with her *a cappella* setting of the G.K. Chesterton poem, *A Christmas Carol*. She writes about her carol:

Perhaps best known for his Father Brown novels, the English writer G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) wrote many works articulating his Christian faith, including his 1908 classic, *Orthodoxy*. An Anglican who converted to Catholicism, his writings had a major impact on fellow writers T.S. Eliot and C.S. Lewis. "A Christmas Carol" comes from his 1900 collection, *A Wild Knight and Other Poems*.

The first three stanzas of Chesterton's poem describe the Christ-child in images that we tend to associate with Christmas: the child lies on Mary's lap, then her breast, and finally her heart. The child's hair is described as being like a light, a star, a fire. We are drawn to this mother and child scene where "here is all alright." Yet what strikes the most about this poem is its fourth and final stanza: the Christ-child now stands—not lies—on Mary's knee; his hair is described as a crown, foreshadowing his death; and now, all creation looks at the child standing in his strength.

My setting, while almost strophic in nature, includes extended endings after the first three verses to evoke the warmth of Mary's lap, heart, and breast. The lush harmonies throughout—arguably from my background as a jazz musician—move to a unison (with the melody a fourth higher than heard at the beginning) in the fourth stanza where the Christ-child stands. The final, unresolved chord on the word "stood" is meant to leave our eyes fixed on the child, wondering—and yet knowing from history—where his steps will lead.

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,  
His hair was like a light.  
(O weary, weary were the world,  
But here is all alright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast  
His hair was like a star.

(O stern and cunning are the kings,  
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,  
His hair was like a fire.  
(O weary, weary is the world,  
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood on Mary's knee,  
His hair was like a crown,  
And all the flowers looked up at Him,  
And all the stars looked down

### **The Alfred Burt Carols**

**Alfred Burt (1920-1954)**

- I. Nigh Bethlehem (1947)
- II. Carol of the Mother (1949)
- III. What are the Signs (1944)
- IV. Christ in the Stranger's Guise (1948)

Son of an Episcopal pastor, Alfred Burt, an American jazz musician, is remembered best for the 15 Christmas carols he composed between 1942 and 1954. In 1922 Reverend Bates Burt began a tradition of sending a Christmas card to friends and family, which included an original Christmas carol. After Alfred graduated from the University of Michigan in 1942, his father asked him to take over composing the music for the family Christmas card carols. After his father's death in 1948, Alfred and his wife continued the Christmas card tradition in his honor. The first recording of all 15 of The Alfred Burt Carols appeared in 1964, produced by Alfred's wife, Anne. In 2001 Burt's grandniece, composer Abbie Betinis, revived the family tradition of sending Christmas cards with an original carol each holiday season; she introduces each carol on Minnesota Public Radio.

I.  
Nigh Bethl'em on a wint'ry night,  
noel, noel, noel!  
Poor shepherds saw a lonely sight  
when angel hosts in vesture bright  
burst forth from heaven's lofty height,  
and sang, "Noel, noel",  
and sang, "Noel, noel!"

Peace and good will the Christ child brings,  
noel, noel, noel!  
And saves all men from evil things,  
for He of whom the angel sings  
is Lord of lords and King of kinds!  
Then sing noel, noel, noel!  
Then sing noel, noel!

So Christian folk, put fear aside,  
noel, noel, noel!  
And spread the gospel far and wide,  
that joy be great at Christmastide,



and God in Christ be magnified!  
Then sing, noel, noel, noel!  
Then sing noel, noel!

II.

Sleep, baby mine,  
a golden star is burning  
in God's clear blue above;  
And O! my heart is learning  
the miracle of love,  
the miracle of love.

Sleep, baby mine,  
I hear an angel singing above thy tiny bed;  
the scent of heaven is clinging  
about Thy tiny head,  
about Thy tiny head.

Sleep, baby mine,  
to one who humbly bore Thee,  
Thy cradle is a throne;  
But all the days before Thee  
are known to God alone,  
are known to God alone.

III.

What are the signs of the morning?  
God, who created the light,  
speak through the gloom that enfolds us,  
when breaks the dawn on our sight,  
when comes the end of our night.

These be the tokens of promise:  
one is a bright star above,  
one a poor child in a manger,  
symbols of faith and of love.  
Hope comes with faith  
and with love!

IV.

I met a stranger yest'-er'en.  
I put food in the eating place,  
drink in the drinking place,  
music in the listening place,  
and in the name of the Triune,  
He blessed myself and my house.  
My cattle and my loved ones.  
And the lark sang in His song:  
Often, often, often goes  
the Christ in the stranger's guise.  
Often, often, often goes  
the Christ in the stranger's guise.

## Around the Turning of the Year

Ralph Vaughan Williams

J. Barrie Shepherd explains the genesis of his text, set to Vaughan Williams' *Forest Green*:

These days, folk seem to leave off from singing carols at sunrise on December 26. A few faithful congregations still save the Orient Kings until Epiphany, but most of us are so sated by the constant November to December barrage that we will gratefully set the old familiars – including *Rudolph* – behind us for another year. Why not a New Year Carol? I thought, a song to be sung in the days that follow *Silent Night*. *Around the Turning of the Year* is my attempt to provide such a carol.

Around the turning of the year,  
when all seems bleak and chill,  
there dawns a time of hopefulness,  
of kindness and goodwill.  
Folk turn toward each other and  
forget their cherished pride,  
seek ways to bless their neighbor,  
set selfishness aside.

Around the turning of the year,  
when nights seem dark and long,  
a radiance fills the midnight sky,  
the streets are filled with song.  
A tale is told of long ago,  
a tale forever true,  
of angels, kings and shepherds,  
of birth and life made new.

Around the turning of the year,  
as dwindling days fly on,  
there comes a time of timelessness,  
a peace that seemed long gone.  
The blessed child is born anew  
To calm our anxious fear.  
And unto all who welcome him  
Eternity draws near.

## Only in Sleep

Ēriks Ešenvalds (b. 1977)

The University of Louisville Collegiate Chorale and Cardinal Singers commissioned *Only in Sleep* in 2010. On a poem by Sara Teasdale, Ešenvalds composed a nostalgic, dreamlike vision of childhood.

Only in sleep I see their faces,  
Children I played with when I was a child,  
Louise comes back with her brown hair braided,  
Annie with ringlets warm and wild.

Only in sleep Time is forgotten—

What may have come to them, who can know?  
Yet we played last night as long ago,  
And the doll-house stood at the turn of the stair.

The years had not sharpened their smooth round faces,  
I met their eyes and found them mild—  
Do they, too, dream of me, I wonder,  
And for them am I too a child?

**Hineh ma tov (from *Chichester Psalms*)**

**Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)**

Sung at Shabbat feasts, “Hineh ma tov” is a Jewish hymn with text from Psalm 133. Bernstein’s “Hineh ma tov” is the finale from his *Chichester Psalms*. The luminous pianissimo harmonies give way to a unison note on the last syllable—an example of word painting: the final Hebrew word, *yaḥad*, means “together” or “as one” and the choir comes together and concludes with *Amen*: so be it.

Hineh mah tov,  
Umah na'im,  
Shevet aḥim  
Gam yaḥad. Amen.

Behold how good,  
And how pleasant it is,  
For brethren to dwell  
Together in unity. Amen.

*Linda Russell, a member of Maine Music Teachers Association and an independent piano teacher, lives in Portland with her longtime spouse.*