



Seek Him

The Choir of St. Mark's
Episcopal Church, Philadelphia
Matthew Glandorf,
Choirmaster & Organist



We begin with the chant *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, which is the Marian Antiphon for Advent and Christmas through Candlemas. Dating from the 11th century, it is attributed to Hermanus Contractus. It serves as the basis of the improvisation at the end of the recording.

E'en So, Lord Jesus may well be American composer Paul Manz's most popular composition. The genesis behind this Advent classic is a rather touching tale. The text was chosen by his wife, Ruth, as they were at the hospital where one of their sons was critically ill. She told her husband to go compose something to take his mind off of his worry, and this anthem was the result.

Ich bin eine Stimme, by the German composer Melchior Vulpius (c. 1579 - 1639), vividly depicts the voice of St. John the Baptist echoing in the desert, through canonic imitation in the upper three voices, finally coming together for the exclamation, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

The German composer Hugo Distler (1908 - 1942) was a great advocate for the renewal of church music and organ building by looking back to the Renaissance and early Baroque. His music is characterized by great rhythmic flexibility and energy and quartal harmony. The three variations on *Lo, How a Rose* are extracted from Distler's larger work, the *Christmas Historia*.

In Winter's Heart, dubbed *Marietta*, written by contemporary composer Chandler York, is in the style of a Shape Note hymn, a form of sacred song that flourished in America in the 18th and 19th centuries. The unique aspect of the harmonic language of Shape Note singing is the unorthodox harmonic language that is the result of the doublings that occur. In this performance, the tenors and sopranos and altos and basses sing each other's parts, creating this rich eight-part harmony that is distinctly "American".

In 2003 I was commissioned by Nassau Presbyterian Church, Princeton, to compose a series of introits for the Church Year. I took as my text Christina Rossetti's simple and touching *Love Came Down at Christmastime*, which to my mind perfectly captures the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Seek Him that Maketh the Seven Stars, by British composer Jonathan Dove (b. 1959), derives its words from the Book of Amos and Psalm 139. The emotional effect of this work is achieved through the development of contrasting short, repeated motives, building toward an ecstatic climax before concluding with an ethereal coda.

Robert Parsons's (1535 - 1572) setting of the *Magnificat* from the First Service is set sumptuously for eight parts. As was the custom of English church music of the period, clarity is achieved through a mostly syllabic

treatment of the text rather than a more highly imitative style of composition.

Although there are several choral settings of the "traditional" English carol *Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day*, Gustav Holst's (1874 - 1934) setting is unique in that it utilized the entire poem, rather than just the "pleasant bits" that are usually heard. The piece begins with a simple, rustic tune with a few sopranos that is later taken up and harmonized by the full choir. However, as the story unfolds, Holst's music becomes increasingly more dissonant and complex, developing more in the direction of a choral fantasy. Most poignant is the transition from Christ's descent into Hell before His triumphant Resurrection and Ascension.

It is always a privilege to include music by local composers during a season that has so many well known and familiar Carols. Philadelphia composer James Testa wrote this deeply felt setting of the *Ave Maria* during his tenure as Cantor at Logan Circle's Cathedral Basilica. Anthony Mosakowski's (b.1970) *Resonet in Laudibus* is a jaunty Latin motet for SATB choir, French horn and soprano descant that shifts deftly between three quarter and six eight time, giving it a piquant, antique flavor. Originally commissioned by The Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia for its annual Christmas concert, it has become a favorite of the Saint Mark's Christmas repertoire.

The Road to Bethlehem originated as a song for voice and piano by English composer Michael Head (1900 - 1976) based on a poem by Margaret Rose. In Head's hands it becomes a simple and evocative vision.

A very fine Carol becomes a winner when an exceptional melody and equally powerful words combine forces. This is certainly true with this setting of *A Stable Lamp is Lighted*. The poem is by Richard Wilbur, onetime poet laureate of the United States and librettist for Leonard Bernstein's operetta *Candide*. Set in a lilting six eight time, David Hurd (b. 1950) wrote a melody that is easy to sing with both great harmonic interest and an independent organ accompaniment, which opens up several opportunities to explore the great expressive range of Saint Mark's Aeolian-Skinner Organ.

-Matthew Glandorf

Acknowledgments

We wish to acknowledge the support of Father Sean Mullen, Rector of Saint Mark's Church. A very special thanks to Stewart Dalzell for his help in making this project possible. Cover photo: Matthew Griendling.

Matthew Glandorf

A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and the Manhattan School of Music, Matthew Glandorf has served as Organist and Choirmaster of Saint Mark's Episcopal Church

since 2005. In addition to his work at the church, he is Artistic Director of Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia and The Bach Festival of Philadelphia. He has been on the faculty of the Musical Studies Department at Curtis since 1995.

The Choir of Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, Philadelphia

The Choir of Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, is known for its distinguished music program that graces its services and lifts the spirits of parishioners and visitors alike. A core of nine professional singers and about fifteen talented volunteers comprise the Choir, which sings the services for Solemn Mass (11:00 a.m. Sundays), Feast Days, and special services such as Evensong and Lessons & Carols, from September to the Feast of Corpus Christi in June. The organ is an historic and beautiful Aeolian-Skinner instrument built in 1937, which incorporates the screen organ by Austin/Carleton Michell, the Wanamaker Shop (string organ), and a West Gallery organ by Cornell Zimmer.

Soprano: Erika Haglund *; Veronica Chapman-Smith *; Addie Peyronnin *; Jessica Beebe *; Patti McLaughlin; Rebecca Harris; Marianne Lipson *

Alto: Suzanne Bratt *; Katherine Moore *; Sharene Azimi; Maren Montalbano *; Lisa Britton; Pamela Covey

Tenor: Steven Bradshaw *; Russell Sullivan; Bryan Park; Aaron Spencer *; Thomas Beebe
Bass: Chris Hodges *; Peter Gulia; Thomas Alton; Daniel Spratlan *; Stewart Dalzell; Gordon Lapp

*Small ensemble for the Parsons *Magnificat*.
Angela Cordell Bilger, French Horn (*Resonet in Laudibus*)

Joshua Stafford, Organist
Matthew C. Glandorf, Conductor

Producer and engineer: Bob Sellman

Co-producer: Bernard Kunkel

Recorded in St. Mark's Church, Philadelphia, PA in June of 2010.

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|---|---|-------|
| 1. | Alma Redemptoris Mater
(Plainsong Tonus Simplex, Mode V) | 1:02 |
| 2. | E'en so Lord Jesus (Paul Manz, 1919 - 2009) | 2:20 |
| 3. | Ich bin eine Stimme
(Melchior Vulpius, ca. 1570 - 1615) | 1:35 |
| 4. | Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
(Hugo Distler, 1908 - 1942) | 3:46 |
| 5. | In Winter's Heart (Chandler York, b. 1978) | 1:46 |
| 6. | Love came down at Christmastime
(Matthew Glandorf, b. 1972) | 2:00 |
| Soloists: Jessica Beebe, Veronica Chapman-Smith | | |
| 7. | Seek Him that maketh the seven stars
(Jonathan Dove, b. 1959) | 6:27 |
| 8. | Magnificat from the <i>First Service</i>
(Robert Parsons, ca. 1535 - 1572) | 5:09 |
| 9. | Tomorrow shall be my Dancing Day
(Gustav Holst, 1874 - 1934) | 5:33 |
| 10. | Ave Maria (James Testa, b. 1948) | 2:55 |
| 11. | Resonet in Laudibus
(Anthony Morakowski, b. 1970) | 2:31 |
| 12. | The Road to Bethlehem
(Michael Head, 1900 - 1976) | 3:36 |
| 13. | "Andujar" A Stable Lamp is Lighted
(David Hurd, b. 1950) | 3:23 |
| 14. | Improvisation on "Alma Redemptoris Mater" | 10:08 |

Saint Mark's Church is known for its distinguished music program that graces its services and lifts the spirits of parishioners and visitors alike. The Choir of Saint Mark's is a semiprofessional ensemble of 24 voices that sings the services for Solemn Mass, Feast Days, and special services in this historic Center City Gothic Revival masterpiece designed in 1847 by architect John Notman.

At Saint Mark's, it has been the tradition to offer both Advent and Christmas Lessons and Carols on the first Sunday in Advent and the afternoon of Christmas Eve. This recording is a selection of some favorites, both traditional and contemporary, from those services, as well as an inspiring organ improvisation by Matthew Glandorf.



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