

# Prelude

*Glorious Music in a Glorious Setting™*

A STUDY GUIDE BY AND FOR  
THE CATHEDRAL CHORAL SOCIETY  
IN PREPARATION FOR ITS CONCERTS  
VOLUME XVII NUMBER 2 CHRISTMAS 2009

CATHEDRAL CHORAL SOCIETY  
J. Reilly Lewis, Music Director  
2009-2010 Season

## CONCERT II

Washington National Cathedral  
Saturday, December 12, at NOON  
Saturday, December 12, at 4:00 PM  
Sunday, December 13, at 4:00 PM



## The Joy of Christmas

Cathedral Choral Society  
J. Reilly Lewis, *conductor*  
Scott Dettra, *organist*  
assisted by

The Heritage Signature Chorale  
Stanley J. Thurston, *music director*

Northern Middle School  
Treble Choir  
Nicholas Petersen, *director*  
and

Washington Symphonic Brass  
Edward M. Nassor, *carillion*



PROCESSION OF THE  
ADVENT WREATH



2009 THIRD MILLENIUM  
CAROL COMMISSION  
Lee Hoiby *The Christmas Tree*

## The Joy of Christmas *A Season of Discovery*



*They brought fine gifts of silver and gold  
In jeweled boxes of beauty untold.  
Unto his humble manger they came  
And bowed their heads in Jesus' name.*

– Langston Hughes  
*The Ballad of the Brown King, 1961*  
(Detail from score cover)

## *The Christmas Tree*

Lee Hoiby

LONGTIME Hoiby collaborator Mark Shulgasser writes that “Lee Hoiby’s most recent composition shows him at the age of 83 still in



full command of powerful choral sonorities and the handsome outflung line he loves. In *The Christmas Tree*, Hoiby’s new carol, he raises the roof rapturously in the manner of his much-performed *Hymn to the New Age*. The carol again takes verses from the seventeenth-century mystical poet Richard Crashaw, also the source text of his 1960 heralded cantata *A Hymn of the Nativity*. Crashaw turned to the imagery of the Sacred Tree well before the introduction of the candy-cane holiday symbol of nineteenth-century German custom. No sentimental ornaments hang from Crashaw’s mighty tree, which reaches from the deepest to highest heights.”

The Cathedral Choral Society gave the world premiere of Hoiby’s *A Hymn of the Nativity* on New Year’s Eve 1961. *Evening Star* music critic Irving Lowens characterized Hoiby’s cantata as “the product of an exceptionally sensitive and imaginative musical intelligence” and described Hoiby’s “lustrous [and] unabashedly romantic” clothing for the Crashaw text as “a welcome contrast to the cold and forbiddingly cerebral aspect that mars the work of some of our finest young creative talents.”

# *The Joy of Christmas 2009*

### **INTROIT: Hodie, Christus natus est (1991)**

This majestic antiphonal motet for double choir is the work of Kola Owolabi (b. 1977), a twentieth-century Nigerian-Canadian composer writing in the Venetian polychoral style of the late Renaissance. *Hodie, Christus natus est* is the antiphon (response) that follows the *Magnificat*, the exultant Cantic of the Virgin Mary, in the Vesper office for Christmas Day. Kola Owolabi began his musical studies at the age of seven in Nigeria, where he lived with his family. Returning to his native Toronto, he entered the rigorous academic program at St. Michael’s Choir School, singing as a cathedral chorister and becoming a prize-winning organist. In addition to degrees from McGill and Yale, he earned a doctorate from Eastman School of Music. At Yale, he was university chapel organist and directed the Yale Divinity School Chapel Choir. He is currently assistant professor of organ theory and university organist at Syracuse University.

### **PROCESSIONAL: Personent hodie (2001)**

The stirring martial character of this medieval carol has decidedly international origins. The melody first appeared in a collection of sacred songs (*Piae Cantiones*) published in 1582 in Sweden by a Finnish student then studying in Germany. In the original medieval song about St. Nicholas, the thrice-repeated notes in the refrain suggest the importance of the Trinity in the life of St. Nicholas. *Personent hodie* may well have been sung in public processions by school boys on the Feast of St. Nicholas, December 6. This arrangement is by Dr. Lara Hoggard (1915-2007), who was professor emeritus of music at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He also directed music for national broadcasts by CBS and NBC radio and television. From 1948 to 1951, he directed Fred Waring’s popular ensemble, The Pennsylvanians, after his predecessor left to found the Robert Shaw Chorale.

### **Who will go to Bethlehem? (2003)**

In this elegant setting of an original pastoral text, men answer the women, then all join in choral unison with descant. An irregular-metered madrigal-like refrain punctuates each verse. A native of England, Simon Warren Andrews (b.1958) was educated at Chichester Cathedral Choir School; Christ Church, Oxford; Royal Academy of Music; and University of California, Berkeley. In 1985, he won the Benjamin Britten International Composition Prize. He currently is a faculty member of the Pennsylvania Academy of Music, where he directs The Academy Chorale and chairs the theory and composition faculty.

### **Lo, how a Rose e’er blooming (1987)**

The imagery of the rose as Mary was common in medieval thought. Many carols are grounded in this vision, including the well-known sixteenth-century chorale by German composer Michael Praetorius (1571-1621). In Jan Sandström’s arrangement, the contemporary Swedish composer (b. 1954), born in Lapland and educated in Stockholm, suspends the original Praetorius chorale, sung by a chamber ensemble, over a wordless tapestry of close harmonies and cluster effects, sung by a large double mixed chorus. Sandström’s compositional styles were influenced early by minimalism, Eastern philosophy, and serialism. He also worked at developing the form of overtone harmony known as spectral analysis.

### **The Birthday of thy King (1988)**

Peter Joshua Sculthorpe (b. 1929) is “the voice of the nation” in his native Australia. His intense interest in the indigenous music of his native land and the Pacific Rim has made his music the most important to emerge in post-war Australia. The Choir of King’s College, Cambridge commissioned this unaccompanied carol for its 1988 Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. Sopranos singing in quasi-organum establish a thematic energy followed by an abrupt mood change as altos give voice to the poem’s melancholic stanzas. Just as abruptly, the sopranos return to their ecclesiastical

tical organum while tenors sing a skipping song, and all join in a prayer of adoration to “sweet Jesu.” The text is from the seventeenth-century poem “Christ’s Nativity” by Henry Vaughan, principal English poet of the Commonwealth period (1649-1660).

### **Puer natus (1991)**

Coen Vermeeren (b. 1962) is a composer, conductor, and aerospace engineer born in Breda, the Netherlands, where he sang treble in the Breda Sacrament Choir. Today, he conducts The Chorale of Breda Cathedral and studies composition with Daan Manneke of the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam. In 1996, he received his doctorate in aerospace engineering from the Delft University of Technology where he is now a member of the faculty. That same year, he published his first compositions, *Three Motets*, including *Puer natus*, the Latin introit for the third Mass of Christmas Day. Composed for an eight-part choir, this motet draws inspiration from the rich musical tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. Calling to mind Arvo Pärt’s minimalism, yet written in Vermeeren’s self-described “intuitive” style, *Puer natus* layers melodic bits and fragments of text to create a kaleidoscopic view of a monochromatic whole.

### **Before the marvel of this night (1979)**

Chicago composer Carl Flentge Schalk (b. 1929) wrote this gentle Christmas carol with his frequent collaborator, Dr. Jaroslav Vajda, an American hymn writer of Slovak descent. Schalk is distinguished professor of music emeritus at Concordia University. He was director of music for the nationwide weekly telecast of the “International Lutheran Hour” and was editor of the journal *Church Music* from 1966 to 1980.

### **The Cherubic Hymn (Op. 31, no. 8, 1910)**

A homesick Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) composed the *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom* after returning from his first American concert tour. When the *Liturgy* was first performed in Moscow in November 1910, the Russian Orthodox Church withheld its blessing, considering the work too modern for church use. Russian music scholar Vladimir Morosan explains the liturgical context of its eighth movement: “The first three verses of the Cherubic Hymn are followed by the Great Entrance, a solemn procession in which bread and wine are taken from the Table of Preparation and placed upon the Holy Table. During the great entrance the priest remembers the hierarchy of the Church, the civil authorities and all those present.”

### **A babe is born (Op. 55, 1971)**

This title carries double significance, for composer William Mathias (1934-1992) entered this life in 1934, the momentous year in which England’s three musical giants — Gustav Holst, Edward Elgar, and Frederick Delius — departed this world. Raised amid the amateur vocal culture of Wales, Mathias graduated from the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth in 1956. Except for a brief stint as a lecturer at Edinburgh University and visits to America, Mathias’s entire life was spent in his native Wales. Out of Mathias’s great affection for America came his appreciation for jazz, which is reflected in this almost giddily rhythmic setting of an anonymous fifteenth-century text. *A babe is born* was commissioned by the Cardiff Polyphonic Choir in his beloved Wales. The Latin incipits refer to three hymns sung as part of the canonical hours and the Gospel acclamation.

### **Break Forth (1990)**

The combined choruses sing this rousing setting of a text from Isaiah scored for chorus, brass, and organ, which was commissioned by the Evelyn White Chorale, an ensemble founded by the former associate director of the Howard University Choir in Washington, D.C. A graduate of Howard, Adolphus Cunningham Hailstork III earned a master’s degree from the Manhattan School of Music and a doctorate in composition from Michigan State University. Dr. Hailstork is presently professor of music and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

## Silver Night *World premiere*

SOMETIMES even a flight delay can be an unexpected blessing — by providing unanticipated time for reflection.



And so it was that a new Christmas carol was born. Melinda Bargreen (b. 1947), who holds a doctorate in English and Comparative Literature from the University of California, was the award-winning classical music critic for *The Seattle Times* for more than three decades until 2008, when major reductions in force at newspapers made classical music critics expendable.

Bargreen used her two-hour “forced introspection” to reflect on Reilly Lewis’s silver anniversary with the Cathedral Choral Society. There in the airport, she wrote down thoughts about “what a silver night might have looked like in the light of the Bethlehem star.” *Silver Night* evokes a serene, moonlit landscape wrapped in a silent blanket of new-fallen snow. “It is,” the composer says, “my tribute to an era of choral excellence that has gone around the world through the Cathedral Choral Society’s live performances, broadcasts, and recordings.”

### *Silent Night, Holy Night*

NOVEMBER 23, 2009 – JANUARY 6, 2010

THE CATHEDRAL’S annual crèche exhibit displays a selection from its collection of more than 500 nativity sets, which interpret the story of Jesus’ birth through the cultures and customs of the world. The crèches will be on view daily in the South Crypt Aisle on the Cathedral’s lower level.

# The Joy of Christmas 2009

CARILLON PRELUDE  
Edward M. Nassor, *carillon*

A MEDLEY OF TRADITIONAL CAROLS  
*Washington Symphonic Brass*

## INTROIT

*Hodie, Christus natus est*

Kola Owolabi

## PROCESSIONAL

*Personent hodie*

arr. Lara Hoggard

CAROL *O come, all ye faithful*

arr. David Willcocks

## PART I ♦ CATHEDRAL CHORAL SOCIETY

*Silver Night* (world premiere)

Melinda Bargreen

*Who will go to Bethlehem?*

Simon Andrews

*Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming*

arr. Jan Sandström

*The Birthday of thy King*

Peter Sculthorpe

*In dulci jubilo*

Praetorius/Snedecor

Washington Symphonic Brass and Scott Dettra, *organ*

*Welcome all wonders*

arr. David L. Brunner

Treble Choir of Northern Middle School

Nicholas Petersen, *director*

*The Christmas Tree* (world premiere)

Lee Hoiby

## PART II ♦ THE HERITAGE SIGNATURE CHORALE

Stanley J. Thurston, *music director*

PROCESSION *New Born: A Christmas Spiritual*

John W. Work

"They brought fine gifts"

Margaret Bonds

from *The Ballad of the Brown King: A Christmas Carol* (Langston Hughes)

*Do you hear what I hear?*

arr. Harry Simeone

*Mary had a baby*

Roland Carter

*Angels we have heard on high*

arr. Stanley J. Thurston

CAROL *The first nowell*

arr. David Willcocks

## PART III ♦ CATHEDRAL CHORAL SOCIETY

*Puer natus*

Coen Vermeeren

*Before the marvel of this night*

Carl Schalk

*The Cherubic Hymn*

Sergei Rachmaninoff

(from *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*)

*A babe is born*

William Mathias

*Bring a torch, Jeanette Isabella*

arr. Keith Chapman

Scott Dettra, *organ*

*Break Forth!*

Adolphus Hailstork

Cathedral Choral Society & The Heritage Signature Chorale

CAROL *Hark! the herald angels sing*

arr. David Willcocks

CARILLON POSTLUDE  
Edward M. Nassor, *carillon*



## Prelude

Founded 1993

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