

Anthem Notes for June 7, 2015

A Gaelic Blessing

John Rutter (b. 1945)

*Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the gentle night to you.
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.
Deep peace of Christ,
Of Christ the light of the world to you.
Deep peace of Christ to you.*

This morning's anthem, *A Gaelic Blessing*, is reflective of the tradition of Celtic/Gaelic blessings. It references those elements of the world that touch our lives—water, air, earth, stars, night, all of it moving to prayer for the peace of Christ, the light of the world, to infuse us. Both musically and textually, the anthem begins and builds quietly, only increasing in full dynamics to the textual and musical high point—“Christ, the light of the world to you.”

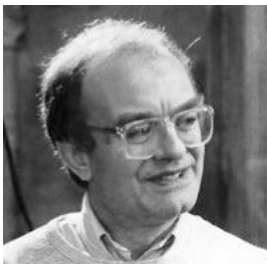
John Rutter's musical setting for this profound blessing is fairly “simple” reflecting the word ‘peace’ although it is as deep as the metaphors contained within. The melody, sung by the sopranos, runs gently upward reflecting the ‘running wave’ and descends for the ‘quiet earth.’ The three lower voices support the melody with a chordal harmonic structure while the accompaniment plays gentle broken chords. After progressing to the previously mentioned soaring climax, a final, very quiet six-part chordal progression closes the anthem with the final prayer: “Deep peace of Christ to you.”

John Rutter is probably the most well known choral composer anywhere today. During the course of his long career, he has created some of the most popular and often performed pieces composed for choirs. Although lasting less than two minutes, today's anthem is one of the finest examples of his writing. Commissioned in 1978 by an American Methodist church as a parting gift for a much-loved choir director, the lush accompaniment perfectly matches the serene text. Sometimes known as *Deep Peace*, the piece became very well known when it was recorded in 2003 by a Welsh singer named Aled Jones.

The music of John Rutter is influenced by the Anglican Church roots of his heritage and also from late Romantic French sonorities; his texts tend either to adapt Biblical passages or texts from the Anglo-Catholic liturgical tradition.

Anthem Notes for June 7, 2015, Page 2

Born the son of a gifted scientist in London in 1945, Rutter showed musical promise from an early age. One of his earliest memories is of playing an old, out-of-tune upright piano and discovering "a world that was somehow my world." He received his first musical education as a chorister at Highgate School and went on to study music at Clare College, Cambridge, where he wrote his first published compositions and conducted his first recording while still a student.



John Rutter

His compositional career has embraced both large and small-scale choral works, orchestral and instrumental pieces, a piano concerto, two children's operas, music for television, and for the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, which featured his anthem *This is the Day*. His larger choral works, *Gloria* (1974), *Requiem* (1985), *Magnificat* (1990), *Psalmfest* (1993) and *Mass of the Children* (2003, composed after the tragic death of his son) have been performed many times in Britain, North America, and a growing number of other countries.

He co-edited four volumes in the *Carols for Choirs* series with Sir David Willcocks, and has edited the first two volumes in the new Oxford Choral Classics series, *Opera Choruses* (1995) and *European Sacred Music* (1996). From 1975 to 1979 he was Director of Music at Clare College, whose choir he directed in a number of broadcasts and recordings.

He has had a remarkable career. In 1980, he was made an honorary Fellow of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, and in 1988, a Fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians. In 1996, the Archbishop of Canterbury conferred a Doctorate of Music on him in recognition of his contribution to church music. He was honored for his services to music in the 2007 Queen's New Year Honors List.

A Gaelic Blessing

Deep peace of Christ, of Christ

The light of the world to you

Deep peace of Christ to you