

Program Notes

Introduction

One of the shortest parables of the New Testament speaks of “a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Matthew 13:52). Today’s concert in this historic chapel illustrates this parable well. For here we have new and old music, set to new and old words. The most cohesive example of this is the modern Bluegrass Mass which comprises the second half of the program. Its music is new, while its words are a combination of some of the most familiar texts in the world (even though they are in Latin!) and of liturgical ballads written just yesterday – or rather just a year ago.

So – get a head start. Read the texts of *The World Beloved*. If not right now, then at the intermission. Right now you should be reading the lyrics for the first half of the concert. They too illustrate the parable: they are as old as the Hebrew psalms and as new as medieval ballads about the Virgin Mary. (Well, maybe that’s not so new!) In between these is a hybrid of the new and old: a short modern hymn that has been “made old” by being translated into Latin!

It’s not false humility when I write: the texts are more important than any “notes” about them. So again, read them – perhaps not once but several times.

Henry Purcell’s *Lord, how long wilt thou be angry?*

Lord, how long wilt thou be angry? Shall thy jealousy burn like fire forever? O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon; for we are come to great misery. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name. O deliver us and be merciful unto our sins, for thy name’s sake. So we, that are thy people and the sheep of thy pasture, shall give thee thanks forever; and will always be shewing forth thy praise from one generation to another.

– *Psalm 79:5, 8, 9 and 13*

These verses from Psalm 79 state, in an expanded way, the strong emotion behind the opening words of the mass: “Lord, have mercy.” Both are prayers spoken by people in need. The verses for the psalm are more nuanced, containing as they do attitudes of desperate questioning, of praise, and of bargaining – with a short pastoral interlude reminiscent of the 23rd psalm.

Henry Purcell, perhaps the most prominent English composer of the 17th century, lived from 1659 to 1695. His widow published his works shortly after his death in a two volume edition entitled *Orpheus Britannicus*. Many of the songs of this “British Orpheus” have remained on the charts ever since.

***Selig sind die Toten* by Heinrich Schütz**

Selig sind die Toten, die in dem Herren sterben, von nun an. Ja, der Geist spricht, dass sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit, denn ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach.	Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth. Yes, the spirit says that they rest from their labors, And that their works follow after them.
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– *Revelation 14:13*

The important German composer Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672) is credited with many “firsts.” He wrote the first German opera. He was the first to set to music the Seven Last Words from the Cross. He is, however, neither the first nor the last to write music for the wonderfully clear and hopeful verse of Revelation 14:13. These words have a liturgical quality to them, due to their frequent use at funerals.

Johannes Brahms’ *Three Marienlieder* (“*Marian Songs*”)

Marias Kirchengang

Maria wollt zur Kirche gehn,
da kam sie an den tiefen See.
Als sie wohl an den See hin kam,
der Schiffmann jung stand fertig da.

Mary’s journey to church

As Mary went to church one day,
she reached the border of the sea.
And when she stood upon the strand
the youthful boatman waited there.

Ach Schiffmann,
Schiff mich über das Meer,
ich geb dir was dein Herz begehrt.
Ich schiffe dich wohl über das Meer,
wenn du willst meine Hausfrau sein.

Soll ich erst deine Hausfrau sein,
viel lieber schwimm ich über das Meer.
Als sie wohl
in die Mitte kam,
fingen alle Glöcklein zu läuten an.

Sie läuten gross,
sie läuten klein,
Sie läuteten wohl
alle zugleich.
Maria kniet auf einem Stein,
dem Schiffmann sprang
sein Herz entzwei.

Der Jäger

Es wollt gut Jäger jagen,
wollt jagen von Himmelshöhn;
was begeg'n't ihm auf dem Heiden?
Maria, Maria, die Jungfrau schön.

Der Jäger, den ich meine,
der ist uns wohl bekannt;
er jagt mit eimen Engel,
Gabriel, Gabriel ist er genannt.

Der Engel blies sein Hörnlein,
das laut' sich also wohl:
Gegrüsst seist du, Maria,
du bist aller Gnaden voll!

O boatman,
row me over the sea.
I'll give you what your heart desires.
Oh yes, I'll row you over the sea
if you'll consent to be my bride.

If I must swear to be your bride
I'll sooner swim right over the sea.
And as she swam
through ocean's midst,
all the bells in chorus began to ring.

They rang out loud,
they rang out soft,
both great and small,
they rang all at once.
Now Mary kneels upon a stone.
The boatman's heart
is broken quite.

The huntsman

The huntsman goes a-hunting
from heaven high o'erhead.
Who has met him thus a-hunting?
Why, Mary, yes, Mary, the lovely maid.

The huntsman whom I mention
is known by one and all.
He's hunting with an angel.
We hail him, we hail him as Gabriel.

The angel blows his trumpet.
It sounds throughout that place.
Let blessings be upon thee,
O Mary, endowed with grace.

Gegrüsst seist du, Maria,
du edle Jungfrau fein!
Dein Schoss soll hegen und tragen
ein Kindlein zart und klein.

Dein Schoss soll hegen und tragen
ein Kindlein zart und klein,
das Himmel und auch Erden
einsmals wird nehmen ein.

Maria, die vielreine,
fiel nieder auf ihre Knie,
dann sie bat Gott vom Himmel,
sein Wille, sein Will geschehen soll.

Ruf zur Maria

Dich, Mutter Gottes, ruf' wir an,
bitt für uns, Maria!
Tu uns in Ängsten nicht verlan,
Jesum dein Sohn, der Not ermahn,
die er um menschlich
Geschlecht wollt han,
bitt für uns, Maria!

Dass wir vollkommen werden gar,
bitt für uns, Maria!
Lieb, Ehr und Gut auf Erd bewahr,
dass wir in Zeit viel guter Jahr
dort leben mit der Engel Schar,
bitt für uns, Maria!

Du bist der Brunn,
der nicht verseicht,
bitt für uns, Maria,
dass uns der heilig Geist erleucht
zu wahrer Reu und ganzer Beicht!

Be blest, O lovely Mary,
thou noblest maid of all.
Thy womb shall welcome and carry
a baby sweet and small.

Thy womb shall welcome and carry
a baby small and dear
whom earth and heav'n shall welcome
as Savior evermore.

Then Mary, holy maiden,
was moved in her joy to kneel.
She prayed to God in heaven
his promise, his promise to fulfill.

Prayer to Mary

O maiden mild, we call to thee.
Intercede, O Mary!
Forsake us not in misery.
Bid thy beloved Jesus see
how sore we suffer
so humanly.
Intercede, O Mary!

Maintain us firm in perfect faith-
Intercede, O Mary!-
that we preserve our hope and breath,
and then survive the day of wrath
to join the angels after death.
Intercede, O Mary!

Thou art the spring
that shall not dry-
intercede, O Mary!-
the light illumining the sky.
Let us repent with such a cry

Here we have a Christmas carol that concludes with an abbreviated version of the “Ave Maria.” You can observe in this medieval Latin poem the beginnings of what we moderns take for granted (until just recently!): that poetry, especially sung poetry, should rhyme.

William Byrd was slightly older than Shakespeare. He lived from 1540 to 1623. His compositions are numerous and varied. He provides us with an early example of ecumenism and cooperation, as he wrote music for both Anglican and Catholic worship. This was during an era when dissension between the two was frequent and frequently bloody.

Once again: enjoy the words – for their simplicity and their fervor.

Eric Whitacre’s *Lux Aurumque*

Lux	Light,
calida gravisque pura velut aurum	warm and heavy as pure gold
Et canunt angeli molliter	and the angels sing softly
modo natum.	to the new-born baby.

– *English poem by Edward Esch, translated into Latin by Charles Silvestri*

The Latin title of this modern song means “Light and Gold.” This helps us to see deeper into this short lyric’s meaning. For gold is also the opposite of “light” – it is dense. (Remember the old science lesson about ... specific gravity?) Yet light can of course often be “golden.” This song, though separated by more than 400 years from Byrd’s *O Magnum Misterium* is, like it, a Christmas carol. Both “say” the same thing, though in different words: the birth of the baby Jesus is something “great” – it is “warm, and heavy and pure.”

The contemporary composer Eric Whitacre was born in 1970. He wrote this song in 2001 for the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay and dedicated it “to my great friend, Dr. Jo-Michael Schiebe.”

Cedit hyems (Be Gone, Winter!) by Abbie Betinis

Nox, et tenebrae, et nubila O Night and clouded Darkness,
confusa mundi et turbida, Confused and troubled world,
lux intrat, albescit polus, Light enters in, the sky is whitening,
Christus venit, discedite! Christ comes! Depart!

–“*Hymnus Matutinus*” from *Cathemerinon II* by Prudentius (348 - ca.410)

Cedit, hyems, tua durities, Now, Winter, yieldeth all thy dreariness,
frigor abiit; rigor et glacies The cold is over, all thy frozenness,
brumalis et feritas, rabies, All frost and fog, and wind’s untowardness.
torpor et improba segnitias, All sullenness, uncomely sluggishness,
pallor et ira, dolor et macies. Paleness and anger, grief and haggardness.

Nunc amor aureus advenies, Now Love, all golden, comest thou to me,
indomitos tibi subijcies, Bowing the tameless ‘neath thine empery.
tendo manus... I stretch my hands...

–*Anonymous, manuscript of Benedictbeuern (Carmina Burana)*

Abbie Betinis was Composer in Residence with the Dale Warland Singers. She gives us another example of bringing out from the treasure of the past what is old and what is new. In the course of doing this, she has also supplied us with a good text for our current weather: “Be Gone, Winter!”

The first four lines of her song are by the early Christian writer, Prudentius (348-410). They are from a much longer poem entitled “Morning Hymn.” In the next eight lines, there is a jump of almost 1,000 years. The words that begin with the title of the piece (“Cedit Hyems”) are from the 14th century monastic collection of songs which we know from the musically popular setting of many of them: the *Carmina Burana*.

Betinis has skillfully juxtaposed these two separate songs, creating an artistic unity in which (to use her own words) “the chorus is finally able to shoo out the desolation of winter with the newly acquired strength that only love can bring.”

Carol Barnett's *The World Beloved – A Bluegrass Mass*

I. Ballad: Refrain

They say God loved the world so dear
He set aside his crown
And cloaked Himself in human shape;
They say that He came down,
And dwelt awhile among us here.
He came on down.

II. Kyrie

Mercy!
Oh, Kyrie! Have mercy! Oh, Christe!
Mercy, Oh mercy, eleison, eleison.
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison
Kyrie eleison, have mercy on creation!
Christe eleison, have mercy on our souls!

III. Ballad: First Verse

A child walked forth on Eden's way,
A child stretched out her hand.
O, may I taste the apple there
And take to understand
The fruit of knowledge in my mouth,
And know of God firsthand?

IV. Gloria

Glory be to God on high,
Who launched the sunlight, loosed the rain,
Who scattered stars across the sky,
Who piled the mountains, rolled the plains,
Who spilled the rivers and the seas.
Oh Glory be, oh Glory be.

Glory be to God below,
For feather, fur, for scale and fin,

For vine uptwisting blossom's fire,
For muscle, sinew, nerve and skin
And every feature set aglow
Oh, Glory be to God below.

Oh, Glory be for peace on earth,
And prayerful be the human heart
That has required a Savior's birth
To make of earth heav'ns counterpart,
So strife might stop and warring cease.
Oh, Glory be for peace, oh, be for peace.

Oh, Glory be the generous Hand
Who left us to our work, and care,
Who gave us only few commands
But that we help each other bear
Life's burdens. Pain and suffering ease.
Oh, Glory be, oh, Glory be.

V. Ballad: Second Verse and Refrain

Adam, he labored, Eve, she toiled,
And many children bore,
And sometimes all was fruitfulness
And sometimes seasons wore
Them down to dust and emptiness
And hunger at the door.

But they said God loved the world so dear
He set aside his crown
And cloaked Himself in human shape;
They say that He came down,
And dwelt awhile among us here.
He came on down.

VI. Credo

Oh, I do believe a place awaits us
far across the Jordan

And when we reach those mossy banks
we'll cast aside our oars.
Row on, row on, we're crossing River Jordan,
Row on, and no one goes alone.

Oh, I do believe a place awaits us
high above the mountains
And when we reach that highest peak,
we'll spread our wings and soar.
Climb on, climb on,
we're climbing Jacob's Ladder.
Climb on, climb on, and no one goes alone.

Oh, I do believe a resting place awaits us,
'cross the Jordan
We'll toss our coats, throw off our hats
and take the seat of ease.
And it's not the seat of riches
and it's not the seat of power,
Row on, row on, and no one goes alone.

VII. Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.	Holy, Holy, Holy.
Dominus Deus Sabaoth;	Lord God of Hosts;
pleni sunt coeli et terra Gloria tua.	heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in excelsis.	Hosanna in the highest.

VIII. Ballad: Third and Fourth Verses and Refrain

The skies exploded, towers fell;
The floods came rushing down
And many souls were burned alive
And many souls were drowned
And others set to marching, marching
Far from house and home.
Where are you now, our Savior dear,
when we are all undone?

But they said God loved the world so dear
He cast aside His crown
And cloaked Himself in human shape;
They say that He came down,
And dwelt awhile among us here.
He came down.

Oh, I am here among you now
Tho' I must pass unseen,
And cannot show why this must be
Nor how I walk between
Your souls and greater dangers
Than you have ever known,
To laugh with you and weep with you,
My people, oh my own.

It's true, I love the world so dear
I cast aside My crown
And cloak Myself in mystery
So I can come on down
And dwell in and among you now.
I come on down.

IX. Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.

X. Instrumental Interlude: Art Thou Weary?

XI. Benediction

Blessing be upon your heads.
Bless the living, bless the dead.
Blessings be upon you, my people.

Blessing so that you may go
Lightly through this world of woe.
Blessing be upon you, my people.

Blessings, and may you embrace
God in guise of human grace.
Blessings now and forever.

XII. Conclusion

They say God loved the world so dear
She set aside Her crown
And cloaked Herself in human shape;
They say that She came down,
And dwelt awhile among us here.
She came on down.

– *Marisha Chamberlain, librettist*

A program note for a sung mass has no one place to begin. The tradition behind it is too large – too extensive. It dates back to the oldest liturgies in the church – back to the time when the Western (Roman) church still remembered, that is, “knew by heart,” the opening words of the Eastern (Constantinople) rite. For *Kyrie eleison* and its slight variation, *Christe eleison* are of course ancient Greek for “Lord, have mercy” and “Christ, have mercy.”

But thanks to the grace that God sometimes bestows upon writers, I’ve stumbled upon a key word that can help us understand today’s “Bluegrass Mass” and give us an insight into the thousands of sung masses that have come down to us from near and far. From Leonard Bernstein’s 1971 *Mass*, to Brahms’s 1867 *German Requiem Mass*, to Schubert’s 1827 *German Mass*, to Mozart’s fifteen complete masses, to

those by the “Father of the modern, sung mass,” the 16th century composer, Giovanni Palestrina – and then back to the one you attended in your parish just today (or last week, if you are here on Saturday). The key word is **variation**.

What we are hearing today is a variation of the classic mass of the Catholic Church. But remember that I stumbled upon this word while quoting the *Kyrie Eleison*. Note that such variation is inherent in our human nature, in our language, and especially in our music. Once you repeat “Lord, have mercy” two or three times, you need to conclude with a variation. So you say (or sing!) “Christ, have mercy.” In the original, the variation is stronger, as the word “Kyrie” has three syllables, while “Christe” has just two. This same basic human need or impulse is found in the traditional concluding part of the sung mass, the *Agnus Dei*. It’s both a religious and an aesthetic variation to change the repeated “Miserere nobis” to “Dona nobis pacem.” Both have six syllables; both mean essentially the same thing; but each sounds differently. And hence each variation calls for a different musical expression.

The composer of the music, Carol Barnett, has taken the ancient liturgical words, and Marisha Chamberlain’s modern “variations” thereof, and has brought out from this treasure “something new and something old.” In her own words, she “gave herself the assignment of bringing the solemnity of the classical-based mass together with the down-home sparkle of blue grass.”

Both the composer and the librettist are conscious that they are stretching the genre to its limit. (Note especially the final and somewhat daring variation of the ballad’s, or hymn’s, refrain: “They say God loved the world so dear.”) Carol Barnett has expressed her hope that listeners from the separate traditions of classical and bluegrass will “discover something new and wonderful in the combination.” And then she shared the pleasure she had in composing *The World Beloved*: “It has given me the chance to write cheery sacred music; it has brought back memories of being with my grandparents who listened to country music with a church flavor that told stories.” Right there is a simple,

unconscious definition of the mass: it is music that tells a story.

A program note for a sung mass should not be too long, for there would be something sacrilegious in writing a “review” of a church service. As you read the words, note especially how the new lyrics are old-fashioned ones that rhyme, and how two parts are kept in Latin – in their pre-Vatican II, familiar form!

But here is one more technical note – and then a final quote from the composer: *The World Beloved* stretches the form of a traditional mass by including additional parts of a worship service. These parts are: the ballad or hymn which serves an interesting artistic function of providing linkage and continuity; the instrumental interlude entitled *Art Thou Weary?* which, in an actual church service, would serve as background music while people came forward for communion; and the benediction at the (almost) end. This can almost trick us into thinking that it’s the classical *Benedictus* slightly out of order. But it is simply a variation of the familiar words spoken by the priest or pastor before the dismissal and the recessional hymn in both the Catholic and the Lutheran traditions. So here’s an unofficial assignment: take your program and share it with your pastor or priest or rabbi or spiritual leader. Ask him, or her, if Marisha Chamberlain has put together a service which they could imagine doing?

And here’s a final quote from the composer. Right after she recalled listening to “country music with a church flavor” at her grandparents’, she added, “Grandma would not have allowed dancing – but under the table I was tapping my toes.”

– Program notes by Rev. Donald H. Fox, Staff Chaplain at the La Crosse campus of Franciscan Skemp Healthcare and Pastor of Lower Coon Valley Lutheran Church