

**Program Notes for A Feast of Carols Concert
December 6, 2008**

Here are the expanded program notes for our December 6th Concert for selected works in our program. They are intended to give you added insights into the music we sing and those gifted composers and lyricists who created it.

Gaudete!: A medieval cantio (song) arranged by J. Edmund Hughes (2005).



J. Edmund Hughes

This medieval song dates to the 16th Century AD and is found in *Piae Cantiones* (1582), which is a collection of 74 Latin songs performed in Finnish Cathedral schools and in central Europe well before its publication date. “Gaudete” is Latin for “Rejoice!” You may have heard the term “Gaudete Sunday.” This is the Third Sunday of Advent in the Christian calendar. It celebrates the joyful anticipation of the Lord’s birth in this otherwise prayerful and meditative season leading to Christmas. In this medieval song, we are rejoicing the Holy Infant’s arrival as “God is made man, while nature wonders (Deus homo factus est, Natura mirante).” The arranger is J. Edmund Hughes who teaches music at Chandler-Gilbert Community College near Phoenix Arizona. He is also the Director of Music at Velda Rose United Methodist Church in Mesa, Arizona.

Ave Maria by Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611AD)



This motet was composed by the most famous Spanish composer of the late Renaissance period. He traveled to Rome in 1564 and entered the monastery founded by St. Ignatius Loyola, who created the Jesuit Order (Society of Jesus). Victoria was ordained a priest and then returned to Spain. He served the Empress Maria who was the sister to Philip II and wife to Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor while she lived with her husband in Vienna. After producing sixteen children and the death of her husband, she returned to Spain in 1582 and entered the convent Descalzas Reales in Madrid. At the convent, Victoria continued to serve his patron as priest, composer, director of the choir, and organist for the rest of his life. His *Requiem* Mass, which he wrote in honor of Empress Maria for her funeral in 1603, is considered one his finest works.

In singing this *Ave Maria*, you should note an absence of vibrato, which is a slightly tremulous effect imparted to vocal or instrumental tone for added warmth and expressiveness by slight and rapid variations in pitch. The reason

you will not hear this is for historical accuracy. Vibrato as a technique was not employed until the Baroque period (1600-1750 AD).

The Dream Isaiah Saw: Music by Glenn L. Rudolph; Words by Thomas H. Troeger (September 30, 2011)



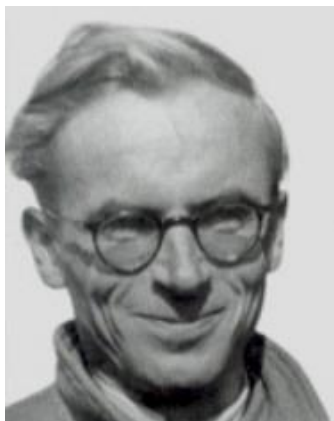
Glenn L. Rudolph



Thomas H. Troeger

Commissioned by the Bach Choir of Pittsburgh in memory of those who perished on September 11, 2001, *The Dream Isaiah Saw* refers to the 8th Century BC prophet Isaiah's vision of God's creation restored to peace and harmony through the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-5). It is the panoramic view of the future Messianic Kingdom. Thomas H. Troeger, professor at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver Colorado and director of its homiletics program, wrote the poem "Lion and Oxen Will Sleep in the Hay" in 1994. The composer Glenn L. Rudolph (composer, conductor, and tenor soloist with many choral organizations in Pittsburgh) began to set this poem to music toward the end of July, 2001. Nineteen days after September 11th, he completed this choral work. It captures the contrast of the chaotic world we live in with Isaiah's dream calling for us to "walk in the light of the Lord." Rudolph and Troeger help each of us respond to Isaiah's dream by asking the Infant Lord "whose bed is straw, take new lodgings in my heart. Bring the dream Isaiah saw: knowledge, wisdom, worship, awe."

Lo, How a Rose E'Er Blooming: anonymous composer and lyricist of German origin in the 15th century; transcribed by German composer Hugo Distler (1908-1942).



Hugo Distler

Hugo Distler transcribed this popular Christmas hymn as the basis for his 1933 oratorio *Weihnachtsgeschichte* ("Christmas story"). Born in Nuremberg in 1908, his musical interest turned from conducting and being a pianist to composition and organ while attending the Leipzig Conservatory. He was especially fond of the organ sound of the Baroque and pre-Baroque era. He had deep religious roots having

been the organist at St. Jacobi in Lübeck in 1931, teaching at the School for Church Music in Spandau, and then securing a position as professor of church music in Stuttgart in 1940. His influence was condemned by the Nazi Party as “degenerate art.” Pressure from the war and the constant threat of conscription into the German Army regime led to his suicide on November 1st, 1942 at the age of 34.



In 1992, Germany honored his contribution to music with on a 100 Pfennig postage stamp. It shows a charcoal sketch of this wonderful composer set on the score of his *Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ* - a sacred choral piece for three children’s voices.

Gloria by Randol Alan Bass (1990)



Randol Alan Bass, born in Midland Texas in 1953, wrote *Gloria* as a separate choral work to be performed with a large orchestra. Skitch Henderson (the original bandleader of TV’s *The Tonight Show* under Steve Allen) conducted the New York Pops Orchestra in the *Gloria*’s premier at Carnegie Hall in 1990. The composer studied under John Williams, the movie composer who has garnered five Academy Awards and ten Grammy Awards for such scores as *Star Wars*, *Superman*, *Harry Potter* and *Indiana Jones*. Williams was also a former conductor of the Boston Pops, which has recorded Bass’s *Gloria* in its album *Holiday Pops*. The influence of Williams on the young Bass who grew up in community theater is noticeable. You can hear it in the dramatic opening and concluding syncopated *glorias*. This is a *Gloria* for an IMAX screen - broad, sweeping, majestic choral music singing praises to God.

A gifted musician based in Dallas Texas, he composes and performs as a singer and pianist. Recently he has devoted more of his time to original compositions rather than producing arrangements because of the high demand for his works. He currently is the Music Director and Conductor of the Metropolitan Winds of Dallas. Throughout his career, he is well known for forming wind and choral ensembles from local communities to help young musicians develop their skills much as he did performing in community-based orchestras and bands.

Mary Had a Baby: Traditional Spiritual arranged by Craig Courtney (2004)

This is a traditional spiritual of the Nativity with many variations in verse reportedly originating in the coastal lowlands of South Carolina. In this arrangement by Craig Courtney as in many others, you will hear a curious verse that reads, “The people keep a comin’ and the train done gone.” What does this have to do with the Nativity? In Afro-American spiritual music, the train often refers to the Underground Railroad for southern slaves planning to seek freedom northward. According to some researchers, these spirituals were used as code words between slaves to avoid detection by their masters. There are also references to the “The Gospel Train” a term applied to the spiritual “Get on Board, Little Children.” According to John Lovell Jr. in his book, *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame: The Story of How the Afro-American Spiritual was Hammered Out* (1972), the imagery of the train seems to be saying, “If you don’t get down to the station and board this train, you have only yourself to blame.” In a spiritual context, Mary’s baby is salvation, so one can interpret the train imagery as an urging not to miss out on Christ. Arthur C. Jones in his book *Wade in the Water: the Wisdom of the Spirituals* (2005) states this particular phrase in *Mary Had a Baby* “reflects the shattered hopes of people who have gathered (physically and emotionally) in the hope of changing their circumstances, only to be disappointed by the continued illusion of actual freedom. Psychologically, this is a particularly powerful song, providing both the hope embodied in the symbolism of the Christmas story and the firm grounding in the reality of current circumstances.”

Ocho Kandelikas (Eight Candles): Landino Song for Chanukah by Flory Jagoda, arranged by Joshua Jacobson



This song relives the memories of Flory Jagoda, born in 1925 in Sarajevo, Bosnia as her family celebrated the eight-day Jewish Holiday Chanukah/Hanukkah or as it is known the “Festival of Lights.” Each night another candle of the Menorah (an eight-branched candelabrum) is lit. Flory learned the songs her grandmother sang as member of the Jewish Sephardic community, a group exiled from Spain in the 15th Century. The language of this exiled Sephardim people was Ladino or Judeo-Español, which is a form of Medieval Spanish. During WW II she lost 42 members of her family to the Holocaust. She and her surviving relatives were imprisoned on the island of Korchula. They escaped to Italy where she met “the most handsome [U.S. Army] master sergeant.” They married in 1945, moved to the United States and settled in Falls Church, Virginia to raise their children. Among her many awards in preserving her Sephardic songs for future generations, she received the National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2002.

***Joy to the World*: A Gospelized Variation for Choir and Brass Quintet arranged by Luther Henderson (1990)**



Luther Henderson

Luther Henderson (1919-2003) grew up in Harlem and became a neighbor of Duke Ellington. He won a talent contest as a teenager playing the piano but initially was looking to pursue a career in math. Instead, he auditioned for the Julliard School of Music and was accepted graduating in 1942 with a major in classical music. Duke Ellington would refer to him as his classical arm as both sought the common ground between jazz and classical music. He was mainly an arranger but he also served as an orchestrator, music director, and dance arranger to many Broadway shows. He worked as pianist and arranger for Lena Horne and numerous other stars on Broadway and television. Late in his life, the National Endowment for the Arts named him NEA Jazz Master for the Arts. For over twenty years, he arranged more than 100 tunes for the Canadian Brass. His arrangement of *Joy to the World* as part of the Canadian Brass Choral Series reflects the animated spirit of this most gifted musician.