

Program Notes

Alle psallite cum luya is an anonymous three-part Latin motet from the late 13th or early 14th century. It is recorded in the Montpelier Codex and is thought to have originated in France. The text is based on the word “Alleluia,” which is repeated throughout in the lowest part while the two upper parts sing lines with successively longer tropes inserted between alle- and -luya. The practice of troping (adding words or whole sections to a single word or text) was popular at the time and consists of enthusiastic affirmations, giving the word “Alleluia” a more celebratory message, used particularly at festivals such as Christmas.

While by my sheep is a 17th-century German carol, whose original words were “Als ich bei meinen Schafen wacht,” written by Friedrich Spee and first published in 1623. Our performance features an English translation of the text by Dr. Theodore Baker. The piece is also frequently called the “Echo Carol” because of its semi-chorus that repeats the end of each phrase.

Welcome All Wonders was written for, and first performed in an NBC Christmas Day Service telecast live from Washington National Cathedral in 1975. The text is by Richard Crashaw (c.1612–1649), an English poet, Anglican cleric and Catholic convert. He was among the major figures associated with the metaphysical poets in seventeenth-century English literature. He was educated at Charterhouse School and Pembroke College, Cambridge. He was ordained a priest in the Church of England. He was strongly criticized by English Puritans for his use of religious art to decorate his church, his devotion to the Virgin Mary and his use of Catholic vestments. Adherents to such practices were violently persecuted by Puritan forces during and after the English Civil War (1642–1651). When Puritan Oliver Cromwell seized control in 1643, Crashaw was ejected from his post and became a refugee in France and the Papal States. While in exile he converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism.

Richard Wayne Dirksen was born in 1921 in Freeport, Illinois, the eldest son of Senator Richard Watson Dirksen. He studied organ at Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore under Virgil Fox, graduating in 1942. He served as organist and choirmaster of Washington National Cathedral from 1942 to 1964. In 1969 he was named the cathedral’s Precentor, giving him administrative oversight of all worship services until his retirement in 1991. Dirksen composed extensively, mostly choral and organ works.

Sean Fleming: Woods In Winter

In the summer of 2016 Anthony Antolini celebrated twenty-five years as Artistic Director of Down East Singers. Sean Fleming composed this setting of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem of the same name as a gift to Dr. Antolini on that occasion.

Delmar Dustin Small’s *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* features original music for the beginning of the piece and then quotes music for stanzas 5 and 6 by Jean Baptiste Calkin that may be familiar to some people. The text is by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882). The composer gives the following history of the piece:

“This composition, written in 2006 for central Maine’s Coda Chorus, restores the stanzas from Longfellow’s 1863 poem referencing the American Civil War, which are often omitted in carol settings. In two stanzas it also quotes the lovely, popular melody by English organist John Baptiste Calkin, which he united with the poem in 1872.”

Delmar Dustin Small’s *Wreath the Holly, Twine the Bay! Christus natus hodie!* is “An arrangement of Macaronic Carols” that include *Make We Joy Now in This Fest* (an Old English Carol with words and tune from the Bodleian Library), *Ding Dong! Merrily on High* (a 16th-century French melody with English words by George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848–1934), *Christ was born on Christmas Day* (a 14th-century Latin carol as found in *Pie Cantiones*, 1582, with English words by John Mason Neale (1818–1866), and *In dulci jubilo* (a German carol attributed to Heinrich Suso (ca. 1295–1366) with English translation by George Ratcliffe Woodward.

The composer writes, "When Maestro Antolini mentioned programming some jazzy Yuletide works, I immediately thought of an arrangement of macaronic carols which I had been considering for quite some time. Macaronic verse includes a wide range of forms where some lines of a foreign language are inserted into the main text. *In dulci jubilo* (widely known in English-speaking lands as *Good Christian Men, Rejoice*) ends this medley, and is arguably the best-known example among a number of macaronic carols with origins in Europe in the late Middle Ages. This use of the term macaronic; the ostentatious, affected fashion referred to in *Yankee Doodle*; and, the popular pasta, are all somewhat derogatory descendants of an Italian word meaning "dumpling." It may be ultimately derived from a word meaning "to crush or pound" or from a barley broth served in ancient Greece in commemoration of the dead.

This medley of several such songs celebrates the unbridled, even giddy joy of sharing Christmas tidings, and includes a *quodlibet* (literally "that which is pleasing," but perhaps best thought of as "a free-for-all"), in this case with all singing an identical part in canon. The British pronunciation of Latin is especially idiosyncratic, so I offer my apologies to the singers who have had to unlearn their fine Latin pronunciation in order to accommodate the rhymes!"

The Huron Carol is Canada's oldest Christmas carol. 16th-century French tune that has been paired with the Native American (Huron) poetry of Jean de Brébeuf (1593–1648), a Jesuit missionary at Sainte-Marie among the Hurons. Brébeuf wrote the original lyrics in the native language of the Huron/Wendat people. The original title is "Jesous Ahatonhia" (Jesus, he is born). Our performance uses an English translation by Jesse Edgar Middleton which features Native American imagery rather than the traditional Nativity story. The translation is derived from Brébeuf's original text and Huron religious concepts. Jesus is born in a "lodge of broken bark" and wrapped in a "robe of rabbit skin". He is surrounded by hunters instead of shepherds and the Magi are portrayed as "chiefs from afar" who bring him "fox and beaver pelts" instead of the more familiar gold, frankincense and myrrh. The English also uses an Algonquian name, "Gitchi Manitou" for God.

Daniel Pinkham's *Christmas Cantata* was written for a concert conducted by Lorna Cooke DeVaron in December 1957 in which there were two choruses – the small Alumni Chorus and the massive New England Conservatory Chorus plus a brass ensemble. Everyone sang the opening section, then the Alumni sang the rhythmically complicated allegro. In the finale, the rondo was sung by all and the verses by a smaller group. All of the texts are found in the Roman Catholic *Liber Usualis* part of the various masses for Christmas.

There are two versions of the *Christmas Cantata*. The original is for mixed voices (performed on our program) and a later one for treble voices. The subtitle *Sinfonia sacra* is used to indicate that Pinkham's work is a modern equivalent of the polychoral motets of Giovanni Gabrieli or Heinrich Schütz. It is truly a hybrid of old and new styles. The pulsing eighth notes in the first movement are inspired by the likes of Igor Stravinsky and the principal trumpet motif in the second movement employs the archaic Dorian mode which goes all the way back to the Middle Ages. The finale is a celebration of old and new with its lilting rhythms, massive choral refrains and brass sonorities.

Daniel Pinkham was born in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1923. His great-grandmother was Lydia Pinkham, the inventor of the famous "tonic" – a patent medicine that sold widely in the nineteenth century. He studied organ and harmony at Phillips Academy in Andover, then at Harvard. His teachers included Walter Piston, Archibald T. Davison and Aaron Copland. He also studied harpsichord with Putnam Aldrich and Wanda Landowska; organ with E. Power Biggs; and composition with Arthur Honegger, Samuel Barber and Nadia Boulanger. His teaching posts included Simmons College, Boston University and Harvard. A prolific and versatile composer, Pinkham's catalog includes four symphonies and other works for large ensembles, cantatas, and oratorios; concertos for organ, piano, piccolo, trumpet and violin; theater works and chamber operas; chamber music; electronic music; and twenty documentary film scores. He was named "Composer of the Year" for 1970 by the American Guild of Organists.

For forty-two years Pinkham was organist of King's Chapel in Boston, a position that gave him much exposure to and opportunity to write church-related music. He also served as organist and harpsichordist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for many years. Pinkham died in Natick, Massachusetts at the age of 83 in 2006.