

QUINTESSENCE

CHORAL ARTISTS OF THE SOUTHWEST

MATTHEW GREER,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
PRESENTS



Birthdays & Anniversaries: MUSIC FOR JOYOUS OCCASIONS

Saturday, May 14, 7pm

at Immanuel Presbyterian Church
114 Carlisle Blvd. SE

Sunday, May 15, 3pm

at St. John's United Methodist Church
2626 Arizona St. NE

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

If one is having difficulty in programming a concert, one of the easiest solutions is to fire up Wikipedia and take a look at which composers are celebrating birth anniversaries. It may be unimaginative, but it works. After all, there was probably not a vocal or instrumental ensemble anywhere in the world that did not perform a quota of Bach in 1985, in honor of his tricentennial.

Quintessence was formed in 1986, and that makes this year our 25th anniversary. So when it came time to plan the season's concerts, I thought "Birthdays and Anniversaries" would be a pretty nifty theme, and I figured that the bulk of the music on the program would be by composers who were celebrating a significant anniversary in 2011. After all, most any year brings some jubilee or another. 2010, for instance, was a pretty good year for this sort of thing: there were anniversaries for Chopin, Schumann and Barber. I settled on the theme just in time to avoid being reprimanded by my board, and season brochures were printed.

Then, sometime last fall, I sat down to actually compile my list: composers of choral music who were celebrating an anniversary in 2011. After literally minutes of exhaustive internet research, this is the roster I came up with:

Franz Liszt

Now, Liszt is a name that makes the hearts of many piano aficionados beat faster, but in choral conductors it generally doesn't inspire much more than confused silence. Undaunted (and a little panicky), I dug into his choral output, and discovered that old Franz did indeed write some really lovely music for choirs. His *Missa Choralis* of 1865, written during one of his manic religious phases, was composed with the hopes that it would be performed by the incomparable *a cappella* choir of the Sistine Chapel. When the score was rejected by the Vatican, he added a clunky organ part and published the piece for general use. We're singing two of the work's five movements: the Kyrie and Benedictus. They're gorgeous.

One composer does not a birthday concert make, however, and so I decided to broaden the theme a bit, to include music "composed for joyous occasions." Birthdays and anniversaries would be fair game, as would weddings and coronations. Baptisms, bar mitzvahs and quinceañeras. Shopping mall openings, if necessary.

Randall Thompson's "Alleluia" may be the best-known and most-performed piece of American choral music of the last century. It was written for a joyous occasion, the opening convocation of the new Berkshire Music Center (now Tanglewood) in 1940. Thompson accepted the commission, but did not feel he could deliver a joyous piece of music. The war in Europe was raging, France had just fallen to the Nazis, and Thompson didn't feel it appropriate to write a "triumphal" score. His "Alleluia" is introspective (the composer even regarded it as "sad"), but it is still sung at the opening ceremonies of Tanglewood every summer, and it is universally beloved.

On the birthday theme, we have John Rutter's irresistible *Birthday Madrigals*, composed to honor the 75th birthday of the great jazz pianist George Shearing. The five movements are settings of Elizabethan poetry in a jazz idiom. (Honestly, several of them remind me of Burt Bacharach). Three of the movements are accompanied by piano and bass, and Rutter is clear in the performance notes that "should a jazz pianist not be available, it is preferable to use only double bass in performance." In other words, it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing.

To honor other occasions, we have the New England composer Daniel Pinkhams's superb *Wedding Cantata*, a four-movement setting of texts from the Song of Songs. And we have Benjamin Britten's "Choral Dances from *Gloriana*," choruses from the opera he composed to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. (Her Majesty, alas, was not amused.)

The singers of Quintessence and I are so pleased to be able to offer this concert of fantastic music, as we celebrate 25 years of choral artistry. And I'm already thinking about next year, so be warned: 2012 will be the hundredth anniversary of both Herman Strategier AND Igor Markevitch. I swear, these programs almost plan themselves . . .

PROGRAM

from *Missa Choralis*, S. 10

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)

Kyrie
Benedictus

*Wil Gonzales, Tania Hopkins, Alyssa Landahl,
Bryan Butler, Jonathan Saeger, Pauleta Hendrickson, Mary-Ellin Brooks, soloists*

Choral Dances from *Gloriana*

Benjamin Britten
(1917-1976)

- I. Time
- II. Concord
- III. Time and Concord
- IV. Country Girls
- V. Rustics and Fishermen
- VI. Final Dance of Homage

Wedding Cantata (1955)

Daniel Pinkham
(1923-2006)

- I. Rise Up, My Love
- II. Many Waters
- III. Awake, O North Wind
- IV. Epilogue: Set Me As a Seal

Checky Okun and Wil Gonzales, soloists

Alleluia (1940)

Randall Thompson
(1899-1984)

INTERMISSION

Jack's Valentine

Libby Larsen
(b. 1950)

Birthday Madrigals (1995)

John Rutter
(b. 1945)

It was a lover and his lass
Draw on, sweet night
Come live with me and be my love
My true love hath my heart
When daisies pied and violets blue

Robert Lah, pianist; Jean-Luc Matton, bassist

You Are the New Day

John David, arr. Philip Lawson

Please silence your cell phones and refrain from blowing party favors during the performance.

Even More Thanks!

POLYPHONY: Voices of New Mexico

Dr. Maxine Thévenot, Artistic Director

presents

A Benefit Concert for Barrett House
Help Feed the Hungry of Albuquerque

June 18, 6 pm concert
silent auction at 4:30 pm

The Cathedral of St. John
318 Silver SW, Albuquerque

Tickets \$30

Purchase tickets at the door
or at www.polyphonym.com

The New Mexican premiere of Henry Mollicone's

The Beatitudes: Mass for the Homeless

and A New Organ Concerto by Andrew Ager

Andrew Ager
Justin Bischof
Maxine Thévenot
Edmund Connolly
Erin Sanzero



Friends of Cathedral Music, Classical 95.5 & 102.9 KHFM, the Cathedral's Outreach Center, and Le P'tit Louis Bistro team up to raise funds and awareness for Barrett House—a women and children's shelter in Albuquerque.

June 17th, 6:30 pm — \$200/person sumptuous 5 course dinner and wine at Le P'tit Louis Bistro, which includes a ticket to the concert the following evening. Seating is limited to 25 persons. Tickets for the dinner go on sale at 9 am June 1— to reserve tickets to the dinner call 505-821-1956.



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