

Vox Grata

WOMEN'S CHOIR

Presents

Songs of Mary

Conducted by Jeanette MacCallum

Dr. John Semingson, Organist

Saint Henry Catholic Church

Nashville, Tennessee

Thursday, January 22, 2015

7 PM

Free will offering to benefit The Next Door

Songs of Mary

Please silence all cell phones and pagers.

In keeping with the sacred nature of the concert, we ask that you hold
all applause until the conclusion of the program.

Magnificat

Christine Donkin

Mareike Sattler, soloist

Magnificat

Herbert Sumsion

Stabat Mater

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi

No. 1 Stabat mater dolorosa

No. 3 O quam tristis et afflicta

Emily Neely and Erica Scaramuzza, soloists

Ave Maria

Eleanor Daley

Regina Coeli (Op. 96, No. 1)

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger

Katie Mullins, soloist

Ave Regina (Op. 171, No. 6)

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger

Tota Pulchra Es

Maurice Duruflé

Litanies à la Vierge Noire

Francis Poulenc

Magnificat

Z. Randall Stroope

Polly Brecht and John Semingson, pianists

Vox Grata Women's Choir

Soprano 1	Catherine Birdsong, Susan Holt, Hailee Hunt-Hawkins, Emily Neely, Charlotte Sublett, Sharon Warfield
Soprano 2	Emily Beavers, Alexa Coulton, Jj Ebelhar, Kaitlyn Lassiter, Katie Mullins, Erica Scaramuzza, Jenny Thomas
Alto 1	Julie Birdsong, Kelly Christie, Jane-Coleman Harbison, Jane Kirchner, Amory Scott
Alto 2	Jennifer Barnes, Kristin Bennett, Linda McFadyen-Ketchum, Mareike Sattler, Denise Statham, Karen Weir

Jeanette MacCallum is the Director of Music Ministries at Second Presbyterian Church in Nashville and is founder and Artistic Director of *Vox Grata*. She previously taught at Pope John Paul II High School as well as at Belmont and Lipscomb Universities in Nashville, Tennessee. From 2002 to 2012, she served as the Director of Choral Activities at St. Cecilia Academy in Nashville, where she conducted various ensembles and taught AP Music Theory. During her tenure at St. Cecilia, the Advanced Choir received superior ratings at all regional and state adjudication festivals in which it participated. Her students also earned positions in numerous All-State and American Choral Directors Association Honor Choirs. In addition, the St. Cecilia Advanced Choir performed at ACDA and TMEA state conferences. Mrs. MacCallum also led the St. Cecilia Choir on performance tours to Carnegie Hall, Canada, and Italy. In 2007, the St. Cecilia Choir performed by invitation at the *Ospedale della Pietà* and the *Ospedale dei Derelitti* in Venice.

Reared in Princeton, New Jersey, Mrs. MacCallum's passion for choral music began as a member of the distinguished Princeton High School Choir. She received her musical education at the Eastman School of Music and Belmont University, and received the Master of Church Music degree from Belmont. A singer, pianist, and conductor, Mrs. MacCallum has also directed choirs at the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University, as well as at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville. She currently serves as the ACDA Tennessee Chair for Women's Choir Repertoire and Standards. Mrs. MacCallum has served as the Treasurer and President of the Middle Tennessee Vocal Association. She is also the author of *"The Sacred Choral Works of the Venetian Ospedali,"* published by GIA in *"Conducting Women's Choirs: Strategies for Success,"* Debra Spurgeon, Editor and Compiler (2012).

John Semingson, Accompanist for Vox Grata Women's Choir, has served as the Director of Music Ministries for Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville, since 2001. He oversees a multi-faceted music program of nine choirs involving nearly 200 children, youth, and adults. John holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in choral conducting, the Master of Church Music in both conducting and organ, and the Bachelor of Music in organ performance. Over the past 28 years, he has conducted and/or served as an accompanist for church, community, university and honor choirs in Illinois, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

Mission of Vox Grata

Vox Grata is comprised of joyful women who, out of gratitude for the fullness of their own lives, possess a desire to sing together for the benefit of others. The group performs repertoire that expresses a uniquely feminine spirit, especially works that promote the best interests of women in society. Vox Grata sings concert programs that directly benefit the needs of women in the Nashville community. The singers also enjoy the opportunity to mentor exceptional high school and college-aged women who participate in the choir as part of its choral scholar program.

For information about supporting Vox Grata--a 501(c)(3) organization-- or to find out about auditions and upcoming events, please visit our website at www.voxgrata.com, or like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/VoxGrata>.

Special Thanks

Vox Grata Board of Directors – Sallie Bailey, Jennifer Barnes, Susan Baughman, Kelly Christie, Susan Holt, Doug MacCallum, and Jeanette MacCallum

Dr. John Semingson, Director of Music Ministries, Westminster Presbyterian Church

Dr. Polly Brecht – Organist, Westminster Presbyterian Church

Ian Petty, Web Design – ianpetty.com

Saint Henry Catholic Church and **Mary Corby**, Director of Music
Westminster Presbyterian Church

Upcoming Performances

Thursday, May 21, 2015: Vox Grata presents “The World in Harmony”
Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville

Friday, June 19, 2015: Vox Grata performs for the Tennessee Chapter of the American
Choral Directors Association, Chattanooga, Tennessee

Texts and Translations

(all translations from Latin by Ron Jeffers)

The Magnificat (Song of Mary)

My soul magnifies the Lord; and my spirit has rejoiced in God my savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things to me; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud, even the arrogant of heart. He has deposed the mighty from their seats, and exalted the humble. The hungry He has filled with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy. As it was spoken to our fathers, to Abraham and His seed forever. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

Stabat mater dolorosa

There stood the Mother grieving, beside the cross weeping, while on it hung her Son.

O quam tristis et afflicta

O how sad and how afflicted was that blessed Mother of the Only-Begotten!

Ave Maria

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Regina Coeli

Queen of heaven, rejoice; Alleluia! For He whom you were worthy to bear, Alleluia, has risen, as He said, Alleluia! Pray for us to God, Alleluia!

Ave Regina

Hail, Queen of Heaven! Hail, Mistress of Angels! Hail, root, hail, portal, from which the Light for the world has risen. Rejoice, glorious Virgin, beautiful above all others. Farewell, most gracious, and pray for us to Christ.

Tota Pulchra Es

Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no stain in you. Your vestments are as white as snow, and your face is like the sun. You are the glory of Jerusalem, you are the joy of Israel, you are the honor of all people.

Litanies à la Vierge Noire (Litanies to the Black Madonna)

Lord, have mercy upon us; Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us; Jesus Christ, hear us, hearken unto us. God the Father, Creator, have mercy upon us; God the Son, Redeemer, have mercy upon us; Holy Trinity, who art the only God, have mercy upon us. Holy Virgin Mary, pray for us; Virgin, queen and patroness, whom Zaccheus the publican made us to know and love; Virgin, to whom Zaccheus or St. Amadour erected this church, pray for us; Queen of the church which hallowed St. Martial, and where he celebrated his holy mysteries; Queen, near whom St. Louis knelt, petitioning for the prosperity of France, pray for us; Queen, to whom Rowland consecrated his sword, pray for us; Queen, whose banner won the battles, pray for us; Queen, whose hand delivered the captives, pray for us; Our Lady whose pilgrimage is enriched with special favors; Our Lady whom impiety and hate have often wished to destroy; Our Lady, whom people visit as formerly, pray for us! Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, forgive us. Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, hearken unto us. Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Our Lady, pray for us, that we may be worthy of Jesus Christ.

Program Notes

Magnificat

Christine Donkin (1976-)

Christine Donkin is a Canadian composer of orchestral, chamber, choral and piano works. This setting of the Magnificat text was written in 2003 and was originally intended to be performed in a prayer labyrinth. The soloist introduces the main chant tune alone, intoning the first two verses of the text—Mary's emotional response to the news given by the Angel Gabriel. The soloist continues by singing the same text and tune three additional times, while a 10-part choir intones the remaining verses of the Magnificat text in tone clusters around the soloist. The soloist introduces the Gloria Patri using the main chant tune, at times alone and at times with choral tone clusters again.

Mary Lycan, music editor and conductor, had these remarks about the piece: "Many Magnificat settings are about joy. This one seems to be about Mary's fear, about the burden of the decision placed upon her. Are the sounds swirling about her the surruration of angels' wings, the half-formed thoughts whirling in her head, or only an echo of her own loneliness? What gave her the courage to say "yes"?"

Magnificat

Herbert Sumsion (1899-1995)

A contrast to the previous Magnificat setting, Sumsion delivers the same text with vivacity and buoyancy, expressing the joy and excitement of Mary's state. The writing is full of text painting, a technique used to emphasize the meaning of words or phrases. The organ writing is equally brilliant in character, supporting the voices but adding flourishes of its own to the work.

Herbert Sumsion served as the organist of the Gloucester Cathedral in England for nearly forty years. He was close friends with the major British composers of his time—Herbert Howells, Edward Elgar, Gerald Finzi and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

In addition to his composing and work as an organist, he was a teacher. Much of his choral and organ literature has become standard literature in the Anglican Church tradition.

Stabat Mater

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736)

Stabat Mater is a sequence of Latin verses commemorating the sorrows of the Virgin Mary. The authorship of the sequence remains unclear, but it is based on various passages from scripture. In 1727, Pope Benedict XIII extended it to the universal Church as "The Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary", which was celebrated on Good Friday. Before and beyond that time, the great master composers have been setting the text to music.

Pergolesi's setting was written just two years before his death, at the age of 24. The work was a phenomenal success and numerous editions appeared during the eighteenth century. The writing offers a highly personal response to the text with an abundance of suspensions, portraying Mary's anguish and pain at the foot of the cross. This was innovative during its time when composers like Buxtehude and Bach wrote in a much more austere fashion.

Ave Maria

Eleanor Daley (1955-)

Eleanor Daley is one of the most prolific Canadian composers today. Her works have been performed all over the world by choirs such as the Toronto Children's Chorus, the Alliance World Festival of Women's Singing in Salt Lake City, and the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay, FL. Also a highly respected accompanist and choral clinician, Daley has a remarkable gift for melody. Her works are most notable for their sensitive interweaving of text and music.

This setting of the Ave Maria illustrates Daley's lyrical melodies and lush harmonies. Parallel motion in the voice parts also suggests medieval sonorities.

Regina Coeli and Ave Regina

Josef Gabriel Rheinberger (1839-1901)

Conductor, composer, organist and teacher Josef Rheinberger wrote many compositions for mixed, female and male voice ensembles. The majority of his secular part songs were written for male-voice choirs, while his sacred pieces featured works for female voices. In addition to three Masses, Rheinberger wrote twenty smaller pieces for two to four part female-voice choir. Many are attracted to Rheinberger's music for some of the same reasons they are attracted to the music of Johannes Brahms. Rheinberger, also German, had many of the same influences and a very similar aesthetic quality. His fine sense of melody and finely balanced harmonic development is evident in the pieces sung by the choir tonight.

These texts, two of the four Marian antiphons, date from the 11th century. Each day, at the close of the Divine Office, one of four Marian antiphons is sung.

Tota Pulchra Es

Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986)

Maurice Duruflé only published thirteen works in his lifetime, including this piece from his *Quatre Motets sur des themes grégoriens*, Op. 10. As an organist and teacher at the Paris Conservatoire and a highly self-critical musician, his compositional output was small in comparison to other composers. He did leave us with one of the most important choral works of the twentieth century—his *Requiem*, Op. 9.

The motets from Op. 10 were written in 1960, each of them composed around a Gregorian chant melody associated with its title. *Tota pulchra es* is the only motet of the set composed for women's voices. It appears that Duruflé made that choice in order that Mary's innocence might be evoked.

Litanies à la Vierge Noire

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Litanies à la Vierge Noire was composed by Parisian-born Francis Poulenc for treble voices and organ (or orchestra) in 1936. The piece was composed in just one week, during a pilgrimage the composer made to an historic shrine honoring the Virgin Mary in Rocamadour, France. The 10th century shrine and city attracted pilgrims for over nine hundred years. The site, considered a symbol of faith and hope, was ravaged by religious wars but eventually restored during the 17th century. The construction of the Chapel of Our Lady was included in that restoration effort. Built on a limestone cliff above a large gorge on the River Alzou, the Chapel of Our Lady houses a statue of the Black Virgin dating from the 12th century. Poulenc was inspired to write *Litanies* at Rocamadour, following the traumatic death of a close friend. The composition marks a turning point in his compositional career as well as a return to his Catholic faith. This piece initiated an outpouring of significant sacred vocal music by the composer, including his *Stabat Mater*, another manifestation of Marian devotion that was first performed in 1951.

Poulenc's conversations with Claude Rostand regarding the piece include these remarks: "For just as there is a specifically French music, there is also a specifically French piety, one that rejects austerity, emphasis and sentimentality and that conveys a certain elegance of spirit, a certain decorum and includes in its gestures a sort of familiarity with the sacred." It was this familiarity that Poulenc was to find in the words he found on the back of a prayer card at Rocamadour and that inspired this piece. The combination of grandeur and humility of the site and the chapel impressed the composer. He wrote: "Clinging in the full sun to a vertiginous crag of rock, Rocamadour is an extraordinarily peaceful place. Preceded by a courtyard, all pink with oleanders in boxes, a rather modest chapel, built half into the rock, contains a miraculous statue of the Virgin, carved, according to legend, in black wood by Saint Amadour, the short-statured Zachaeus of the Gospel, who climbed into a tree in order to see Christ."

With rare intuition, Poulenc has found exactly the right tone of peasant devotion inspired by the rock chapel of Rocamadour. The sectional form and cyclical structure of the piece serve the text well, while the dissonant "shock" chords evoke emotional turmoil. Several measures of organ precede the first invocation by the voices, sung in humble, chant-like fashion by the sopranos, followed by a brief crescendo on the words "Jesus Christ hear us" by the full choir. This is followed by a series of supplications of varying texture and weight. The piece builds in power and scope as the voices and ever expanding chords in the organ accompaniment continue to beseech Christ and all the Saints. The text painting is brilliant, displaying the awe and beauty Poulenc felt when entering the shrine. The work is filled with purity of

expression and powerful declamation through shifting meters and modal harmonies. The overall construction of the *Litanies* rests on the dynamic contrasts dictated by the texts. At the climax of the piece, the singers implore Mary for help, recalling her role in other significant moments of French History. The anguish of the appeal was to be prophetic, given France's imminent fall to the Third Reich in May of 1940. The work ends in an extremely luminous, gentle mood.

Magnificat

Z. Randall Stroope (1953-)

Z. Randall Stroope is one of the most active choral conductors and composers working today, having conducted over 35 all-state choirs and toured much of the world as a conductor. Stroope is the Director of Choral and Vocal Studies at Oklahoma State University. As a composer, he has published nearly one hundred works which are performed by choirs all over the world.

His setting of the Magnificat text was commissioned for the 2001 National Convention of the American Choral Directors Association in San Antonio, Texas. The piece is rhythmic and vigorous, including a four-hand piano accompaniment and concludes with a joyful, sonorous choral "Amen".



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