

*What would worship be without music? ~Anonymous*

# Musical Notes:

## A Moveable Musical Feast: From Crescendo to Crescendo

By David W. Foerster, Jr.



### ALL SAINTS' DAY

The choir donned their rich red robes and deftly sung a moving interpretation of Mozart's unsurpassed Requiem in D Minor.

The fanfare and excitement that choir, brass, timpani and organ provided splendid color. Worshippers experienced the full power of Jesus Christ, which this Requiem of requiems transports to the forefront. Our hearts were struck with tears of joy and lingering sadness as we remembered those we love who have entered the heavens.

### PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD

One of All Saints' bright musical lights, Dr. Michael Crowe, welcomed Advent with a pensive, reflective, and exquisitely executed organ concert. Dr. Crowe cleverly chose chiefly American composers that brought shimmers of light through the dark and bitter November evening. By performing two settings of Veni Emmanuel, a 15th century plainsong along with two settings of "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming," Michael stroke a note of musical brilliance that afforded provocative and moving images of Advent. Henry Kihlken's Noel with Variations brought hope that our hearts and souls will be ransomed as the shimmering light of Advent becomes everlasting at Christmas. Michael's skillful treatment of the Fugue and Plein Jeu were inspired.

Michael's concert followed Evensong, a regular musical offering of the Church under the direction of Jefferson McConnaughey. Not only is Jeff a splendid organist and musicologist, but also he has created through the vehicle of Evensong a solemn space for worshippers to sit with God, while surrounded by the musical tones that emerge from this historic Anglican sung service.

### CHRISTMAS EVE

On Christmas Eve Ray Chenault and his forces offered J.S. Bach's timeless Magnificat. No setting of Mary's eternal song of joy, which was written by the famed composer to crown Evensong on Christmas Day 1723, is more revered or performed. The All Saints' Choir rendered a matchless voicing of Mary's historic proclamation. As soloists Maria Valdes, DeWayne Trainer and Laurie Swann (her treatment of John La Montaine's "Behold, A Virgin Shall Be with Child" was spectacular) deserve special applause.

Ray's selection of Rutter's hymn arrangements brought an extra measure of warmth to the Church's Christmas celebration. Simply stated, the conductor, his choir and supporting instrumentalists were at their best.

### THE 2008-2009 CONCERT SERIES

#### *The Phantom of the Opera with Organist David Briggs*

On October 28th the Concert Series opened with a thrilling presentation arranged and executed by master organist David Briggs. All Saints' nave and chancel was transformed

into a gothic operatic set capturing the essence of a Parisian All Hallows Eve. Briggs impressive improvisations artistically matched the 1925 silent film *The Phantom of the Opera*, starring Lon Chaney, which was screened in the chancel. At his skillful hand, the audience was titillated and simultaneously awed by a spellbinding musical mosaic of Bizet, Mendelssohn, Offenbach and others. This famed silent film depicting the mystery and suspense at the Paris Opera House and Briggs mastery as an organist was greeted with rave applause from a spirited gathering of music and film lovers.

#### *The Christmas Concerts*

Master musician Jonas Nordwall returned to All Saints' on December 3rd and showered concertgoers with the lush sounds of Christmas. Nordwall eloquently and gracefully turned his attention to a lighter side of Christmas in his Holiday Pops Organ Concert. Known principally as a theatre organist, his musically far outstrips that distinction. If there is an organist who can make an organ sound, it is Nordwall. His verbal interludes clearly indicate his depth as a musicologist.

One felt that certain joy that penetrates each of us as we embrace the spirit known only as Christmas. The music was familiar – "Echo Noel" by Daquin and Dupre's famous setting of "Adeste Fideles"—the joys of Christmas past unwrapped once again, but the music was fresh as it stirred our senses, as we await the perennial gift of Christmas present. While his treatment of each piece was artistically unique, the encore based on "God rest you merry, gentleman" from the famed *Little Book of Christmas Carols* published in 1850 was without equal.

With Christmas Eve less than two weeks away, The Atlanta Opera Chorus best soloists accented by a brass ensemble from the opera's orchestra presented a fabulous Christmas celebration under the direction of its chorus master, Walter Huff. Mixed in genre, Huff's singers intoned the most glorious selections from J.S. Bach's Magnificat and Christmas Oratorio as well as portions of Vaughan Williams' *Hodie* and familiar secular Christmas carols.

In addition to flawlessly conducting this rich evening of music, Walter skillfully and gracefully accompanied his forces on the piano, with Peter Marshall providing a rich 'symphonic effect' at the organ. The eight soloists were super, each bringing the richness of their musical gifts to the listeners

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who packed the pews. Whether singing individually or as an ensemble, their voicing was generally seamless and balanced. Their diction and phrasing was superb. While still maturing as a singer, Cullen Gandy's tenor voice was beautifully strong and confident, with an element of sophistication. The duet of "Gesù Bambino" sung by Amy Little and Kaitlyn Costello was stunning. And tenor Timothy Boyd Miller was an audience favorite.

"The Christmas Lullaby" sung by the woman's ensemble and the encore, "New Day" sung by the entire ensemble charged the air, invoking the warmth and joy of Christmas. The interplay between the organ and the Brass Quintet was quite moving. I was particularly struck by the musicianship of Yvonne Toll (trumpet) and Ann Lilya (oboe). Walter Huff's treatment of Auld Lang Syne was tender and provocative – a showstopper. His ease at the piano underscored the awesome talent of this masterful musician. This rich and adeptly programmed concert more than deserved the multiple standing ovations it received.

#### *The Classical Concerts*

The New Year brings Richard Clements back to the chancel steps. On the 27th of January, the Grammy winning lyric tenor, who schooled at Georgia State and experienced further maturation under the batons of Ray Chenault and Robert Shaw will present *Songs of Hope and Longing*. Rick will scintillate his audience with songs from composers spanning five centuries. The tenor referred to his concert as a "greatest hits recital with an emphasis on British and American songs." But not to worry, German, Russian and French songs will be heard. Rick, whose talent has taken him around the world, considers All Saints' one of his musical homes.

Exactly a month later, Ray Chenault will offer a splendid concert of French organ music from the 19th and 20th centuries. Ray, by employing the music of Frank, Langlais and Widor, will celebrate the fifth anniversary of the dedication of the James G. Kenan Memorial Organ. This not to be missed concert promises to be one of the highlights of the year. Most of the congregants that have heard Ray play over the years associate him with the creations of English, American and African-American composers. But as the audience will undoubtedly hear, he has a strong French side, as well.

The season concludes with the strong and stellar voices of the men of Morehouse. This nationally prominent chorus, directed by Dr. David Morrow, has performed at Martin Luther King, Jr.'s funeral, for United States presidents, at the Olympics, and on countless occasions with Robert Shaw and the ASO. As Ray Chenault commented, "This is a fitting finale of an altogether exciting season."