

## Director's Greeting

Welcome to *Christmas with Novi Cantori!*

Our holiday program marks the finish of an unforgettable calendar year – spanning a composer's workshop in March, our spring concert season, and an extraordinary opportunity to perform with the Tapiola Chamber Choir of Finland during their first-ever tour of the US this summer. These are peak experiences and, especially for the concert with Tapiola, they have no price tag. Yet as I sit writing this, I think of how fortunate we are to taste inspiration *any time* we lift music to life off the page. In this busy time of year, we're thrilled that you have come to bask in beautiful music with us, and be inspired through it.

Our concert in Chicopee also allows us to highlight the outreach of the Boys and Girls Club, with whom we're delighted to partner again this year. We hope this "concert for a cause" enriches their work in this holiday season and empowers many incredible young people.

With 2016 upon us, be sure to mark your calendars for *Voices of New England* and our performances in Amherst, Longmeadow and Hartford this coming April. Continue to follow *News from Novi*, in all its forms. And today, know that we thank you for being the wonderfully receptive audience you are.

With our best wishes for this holiday season,

Ellen Gilson Voth  
Artistic Director

### Notes on the program - Texts and Translations

One of the roles of **J.S. Bach** as cantor at the *Thomaskirche* in Leipzig was to create multi-movement works to accompany weekly Lutheran services. It was a task he carried out with astonishing speed and inventiveness, with over one hundred fifty extant cantatas from his years of employment there. The chorale cantata "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" was composed for the Festival of the Annunciation (based on the account in Luke 1:26-28), celebrated on March 25, 1725. As is typical of the cantatas from Bach's second year in Leipzig, the hymn's first and last verses appear in the opening and closing movements:

*Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern  
Voll Gnad' und Wahrheit von dem Herrn,  
Die süße Wurzel Jesse!  
Du Sohn David aus Jakobs Stamm,  
Mein König und mein Bräutigam,*

How beautifully shines the morning star  
full of grace and truth from the Lord,  
the sweet root of Jesse!  
You son of David from the line of Jacob,  
my king and my bridegroom,

*Hast mir mein Herz besessen.  
Lieblich, freundlich,  
Schön und herrlich, groß und ehrlich,  
Reich von Gaben,  
Hoch und sehr prächtig erhaben!*

have taken possession of my heart.  
[you who are] lovely, friendly,  
beautiful and glorious, great and honorable,  
rich in gifts,  
lofty and exalted in splendor!

*Wie bin ich doch so herzlich froh,  
Daß mein Schatz ist das A und O.  
Der Anfang und das Ende!  
Er wird mich doch zu seinem Preis  
Aufnehmen in das Paradeis,  
Des klopf' ich in die Hände.  
Amen! Amen!  
Komm, du schöne Freudenkrone,  
Bleib nicht lange,  
Deiner wart' ich mit Verlangen!*

How full I am therefore of heartfelt joy  
that my treasure is the alpha and the omega,  
the beginning and the end;  
To his reward he will  
take me up to paradise,  
and so I clap my hands.  
Amen! Amen!  
Come, you sweet crown of joy,  
do not long delay,  
I wait for you with longing.

English Translation by Francis Browne

Regarding his choice of text for the composition “Angel Song”, composer **Dan Locklair** writes:

“Following his graduation from Harvard Divinity School, Moncure Daniel Conway, a native of Virginia, settled in the Boston area and became a Unitarian minister and prolific author. Influenced by the transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson, he was an outspoken critic of slavery. His hymn text, “Now let the angel song break forth”, was written in December 1863, only days prior to President Lincoln issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. In ‘Angel Song’ I have sought to musically capture the vibrancy, pain and timeless reflections found in Rev. Conway’s expressive words.”

Now let the angel-song break forth!  
For night shall nevermore be night;  
A quenchless star climbs o’er the earth,  
A torch lit up from God’s own light.

There where the watching shepherds pressed,  
Where Eastern seers bowed them low, -  
From pole to pole, from east to west,  
See the world’s tidal pulses flow!

I saw the warrior on the plain  
Pause in that light to sheathe his sword;  
I saw the slave look up in pain, -  
Chains melted in the fires it poured.

Thou, God, who gavest our night this star,  
Whose circling arm excludeth none.  
Gather our treasures from afar

To the soul's monarch inly born!

Kindle thy blessed sign again,  
For the New World a Christ's new birth,  
When to our cry, Good-will to men,  
The heavens shall answer, Peace on earth!

Chant: *Conditor alme siderum* \* (Chicopee performance)

*Conditor alme siderum  
aeterna lux credentium  
Christe redemptor omnium  
exaudi preces supplicum.*

Creator of the stars,  
Eternal light of those who believe,  
Christ, Redeemer of all,  
Hear favorably our suppliant prayers.

*Qui condolens interitu  
mortis perire saeculum  
salvastis mundum languidum  
donans reis remedium.*

Who, suffering within  
to take away the age of death -  
You have saved the languishing world  
(by) giving a remedy.

*Vergente mundi vespere  
uti sponsus de thalamo  
egressus honestissima  
Virginis Matris clausula.*

(In the) verdant evening of the world  
from the bridal chamber  
the most honest bridegroom came forth  
from the womb of the Virgin Mother.

*Cuius forti potentiae  
genu curvantur omnia  
caelestia, terrestria  
nutu fatentur subdita.*

At whose powerful might  
All knees are bent -  
all in heaven and on earth  
are made subservient to his will.

*Sit, Christe rex piissime  
tibi Patrique gloria  
cum Spiritu Paraclito  
in sempiterna saecula. Amen.*

Let there be, O Christ, our loving King,  
glory to Thee the Father,  
with the Spirit, the Paraclete,  
Forever and ever. Amen.

The constantly changing political and religious climate in England during the life of **Thomas Tallis** contributed, in large part, to his remarkable flexibility for composing for Catholic and Protestant liturgies. His motet "O nata lux" was published in 1575, as part of the *Cantiones Sacrae* (collection of Latin motets) which he and William Byrd jointly produced.

*O nata lux de lumine,  
Jesu redemptor saeculi,  
dignare clemens supplicum  
laudes precesque sumere.  
Qui carne quondam contegi  
dignatus es pro perditis,  
nos membra confer effici  
tui beati corporis.*

O Light born of Light,  
Jesus, redeemer of the world,  
with kindness deign to receive  
the praise and prayer of suppliants.  
You who once deigned to become flesh  
for the sake of the lost,  
grant us to be made members  
of your blessed body.

Translation: Robert Coote

It was for his *Strathclyde Motets* that **James MacMillan** received the 2008 British composer award for liturgical music. The opening chords of “O Radiant Dawn” bear striking resemblance, melodically and harmonically, to the first chords of Tallis’ “O nata lux”; they are followed by repeated suspensions on the word “come”, a soprano and alto duet quoting a prophesy from Isaiah, and a repeat of the opening before a final six-fold Amen. The text is based on the antiphon for December 21:

O Radiant Dawn, Splendour of eternal Light, Sun of Justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Isaiah had prophesied: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.”

O Radiant Dawn...

Amen.

While the output of Pulitzer prize winning composer **Ned Rorem** spans almost every musical medium, he has said that “whatever his music is written for – tuba, tambourine, tubular bells – it is always the singer within me.” Rorem’s *Seven motets for the church year*, for mixed unaccompanied choir, were commissioned by All Saints Episcopal Church, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, for their seventy-fifth anniversary. The first of the motets is marked by motivic writing and chromaticism, the second more folk-like in its presentation.

Motet 1: While all things were in quiet silence, And that night was in the midst of her swift course, Thine Almighty Word, O Lord, leaped down out of thy royal throne. Alleluia.

Motet 2: Before the morning star begotten and Lord from everlasting, our Savior is made manifest unto the world today.

**Libby Larsen** first discovered the writings of Utah native Vesta Pierce Crawford (1899-1983) in the book, *Best Loved Poems of the American West*. Larsen’s tonal palette in this piece is wide, with extended vocalises and continuously surging dynamics (for both voice and piano) that are intended to capture the vast expanses described in words.

Beneath these alien stars, in darkness I have stood alone; more than mountains come between me and my home. The desert wind has waved my hair: Desert sands have etched my face, and the courage of the mountains has bound me to this place, and something of its peace I’ve won. I have stood with only God between me and the sun.

- from *Pioneer Woman* by Vesta Pierce Crawford

The life of Sara Teasdale (1884-1933) is marked by the extraordinary honors she received for her poetic work along with the physical and emotional struggles she endured. The poignant yet hope-filled “There will be rest” was written months

before her untimely death in New York City; composer **David Dickau** (also conductor at Minnesota State University, Mankato) captures her text with musical writing equally as poignant and hope-filled:

There will be rest, and sure stars shining  
Over the roof-tops crowned with snow,  
A reign of rest, serene forgetting,  
The music of stillness holy and low.

I will make this world of my devising  
Out of a dream in my lonely mind.  
I shall find the crystal of peace, – above me  
Stars I shall find.

*Traditional Carol texts:*

A gallery carol (Granville performance)

Rejoice and be merry in songs and in mirth!  
O praise our Redeemer; all mortals on earth!  
For this is the birthday of Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation, his praises we'll sing!

A heavenly vision appeared in the sky;  
Vast numbers of angels the shepherds did spy,  
Proclaiming the birthday of Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation, his praises we'll sing!

Likewise a bright star in the sky did appear,  
Which led the wise men from the East to draw near;  
They found the Messiah, sweet Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation, his praises we'll sing!

And when they were come, they their treasures unfold,  
And unto him offered myrrh, incense and gold.  
So blessed forever be Jesus our King,  
Who brought us salvation, his praises we'll sing!

People look east (French carol; English text by Eleanor Farjeon, 1881-1965)

People, look east, the time is near  
Of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able,  
Trim the hearth and set the table.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the guest, is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,  
One more seed is planted there:  
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
That in course the flower may flourish.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the rose, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim  
One more light the bowl shall brim,  
Shining beyond the frosty weather,  
Bright as sun and moon together.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the star, is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth  
Him who brings new life to earth.  
Set every peak and valley humming  
With the word, the Lord is coming.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Infant holy, infant lowly (Polish carol; English text by Edith Reed, 1885-1933)

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;  
Oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.  
Swift are winging, angels singing, noels ringing, tidings bringing:  
Christ the babe is Lord of all. Christ the babe is Lord of all.

Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new  
Saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.  
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:  
Christ the babe was born for you. Christ the babe was born for you.