

July 2003

Light From The West

*American Music
Sacred and Secular*



York County Choral Society

Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA

David M. Lowry, *Conductor* • J. Michael Grant, *Organist*

Tour of England, Scotland, Wales, & Ireland 2003

CELEBRATING THE TWENTY-SECOND SEASON OF THE YCCS

YORK COUNTY CHORAL SOCIETY

United Kingdom Tour July 11-22, 2003

LITERATURE FOR CONCERTS

Bright Canaan - arr. by Alice Parker and Robert Shaw
 Choose something like a star - Randall Thompson
 The Banks o'Doon - James Mulholland
 Four Persian Poetic Fragments - Bruce Thompson
 Sing me to heaven - Daniel Gawthrop
 How can I keep from singing? - Ronald Staheli
 Miriam Mick, soprano
 From *Porgy and Bess* - George Gershwin
 Summertime
 Bess, you is my woman now
 Wendy Wingard-Gay, soprano and Linwood Little, baritone
 All the things you are, from *Very Warm for May* - Jerome Kern

LITERATURE FOR CHORAL EVENSONGS

Responses - Craig Phillips
 Psalm chants - Alec Wyton, Gary Davison, David M. Lowry
 St. Francis Canticles - Gary Davison
 Let all the peoples praise you, O God - Bruce Neswick
 The morning shall awaken - David M. Lowry

SINGING DATES ON THE TOUR

Sunday, July 13, 2003
 Concert at St. Matthews Parish, Alnwick, Northumbria, England

Tuesday, July 15, 2003
 Evensong at St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, Scotland

Saturday, July 19, 2003
 Concert at St. Deiniol's Cathedral, Bangor, Wales
 Shared with the City of Bangor Male Voice Choir

Sunday, July 20, 2003
 Evensong at St. Deiniol's Cathedral, Bangor, Wales

Monday, July 21, 2003
 Evensong at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, Ireland

Light from the West Music by American Composers

The York County Choral Society has its home in Rock Hill, South Carolina, just over the state line from Charlotte, North Carolina. Rock Hill is in York County, adjoining Chester and Lancaster Counties in South Carolina. Charlotte (named for Queen Charlotte) is in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. While this hardly constitutes a British heritage, at least in name the region has links to the UK.

In 2000, the YCCS embarked on its first overseas tour. The choir was in residence at St. David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire, and gave concerts in Gloucestershire and in the cathedrals at Durham and Lincoln. Both tours feature music by American composers.

American leaders admire greatly the choral traditions of the UK, and often sing the secular and sacred works of great British and Continental composers from many centuries. The 20th century became, for America, a century of style synthesis. Many styles from the East side of the Atlantic merged with a multitude of ethnic and classical styles which often formed music that is distinctly nationalistic American music.

It is difficult for anyone on either side of the Atlantic to comprehend fully the extraordinary vastness of the USA, both in terms of geography and population. There are legions of fine composers who are known regionally, nationally, and internationally. Many choral leaders would not know some of the works we perform, and we would know only a fraction of what many other choruses perform.

We believe we are singing music from the pens of composers who strive to maintain a standard of excellence. Much of what we sing reflects European heritages, American jazz harmonic idioms, and American folk traditions.

DAVID M. LOWRY, CONDUCTOR

David M. Lowry, DMA, HonRSCM, is the co-founder of the YCCS and has served as its music director since its beginning. He is Professor of Music *Emeritus* at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, the Parish Musician of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Columbia, SC. For 21 years he served on the Board of the Royal School of Church Music in America, for which the RSCM bestowed on him the HonRSCM in 2002 at St. Asaph Cathedral, Wales. He is a past president of the Association of Anglican Musicians, which he currently serves as national placement advisor. For the AAM, he has led two conferences in the UK. He is also a concert organist and composer. His anthem "The morning shall awaken" was written in memory of Elisabeth Williams Dakers, wife of recently deceased Lionel Dakers, long-time Director of the RSCM. The Salisbury Cathedral Choir, Richard Seal conducting, sang its first performance. Dr. Lowry appears on the ProOrgano label CD *Breaking Ground* with trumpeter Michael Miller.

J. MICHAEL GRANT, Organist and Pianist

J. Michael Grant, DMA is the Associate Director of Music and Organist at Christ Episcopal Church in Charlotte, NC, where he works with Music Director and Organist Christopher Brayne, formerly of Bristol Cathedral in the UK. A native of South Carolina, Dr. Grant was schooled at Newberry College, Converse College, and Catholic University of America. Among his teachers has been Marie-Claire Alain. He has held church positions in Virginia, Maryland and Paris, France, at St. Michael's English Church, the church of the British Embassy. He has served on the faculties of Newberry and Limestone Colleges in South Carolina. As a recitalist he has performed in the Europe and the USA. He has been a featured artist in the Piccolo Spoleto Festival USA and the Organ Historical Society. He is featured on CDs of the Organ Historical Society on organs in San Francisco and Baltimore as well as Christ Church, Charlotte

MEMBERS OF THE YORK COUNTY CHORAL SOCIETY

Lil Adickes, Doris Beinz, Robyn Brown, Bradley Brown, Sara Castillo, Bill Castillo, Martha Cowan, Dave Cowan, Jane Culp, Jeff Culp, Faye Daniel, Michael Davis, Louisa Dills, Mike Faris, Chip Grant, Priscilla Jennings, Pat Johnson, Mickey Johnson, Linwood Little, Nina Lynch, Miriam Mick, Mary Moss, Larry Richards, Beth Rouse, Mike Rouse, Betty Salmond, Linda Shealy, Margaret Ann Tice, Al Ward, Wendy Wingard-Gay,

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

John Cook (1918-1984) was a native of England, educated at Cambridge under Boris Ord and David Willcocks. From 1962 until his death, his career was centered in Canada and the USA, most notably at the Church of the Advent in Boston, Massachusetts.

Gary Davison (b. 1961) is the organist and choirmaster of St. Francis' Church, Potomac, Maryland. Mr. Davison's catalog includes a number of anthems and organ works. In 1997 the Association of Anglican Musicians commissioned him for an anthem that was first performed in Southwark Cathedral and conducted by David Lowry. The *St. Francis Canticles* were composed last year for his parish choir to sing in the Washington National Cathedral.

Daniel Gawthrop (b. 1949) is a composer and music critic in the Washington, DC area. His works for chorus and for organ, both sacred and secular, have been performed throughout the USA, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Salt Lake City Mormon Tabernacle, and Washington National Cathedral

George Gershwin (1898-1937) possessed an incredible gift for writing melody, and much of his writing was influenced greatly by the musical life of New York City in the 1920s. His compositions have become classics in their own right. *Rhapsody in Blue* is a world favorite. His 1935 opera, *Porgy and Bess* is in the repertory of many opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York. That opera, by the way, has as its setting the historic city of Charleston, South Carolina.

Jerome Kern (1885-1945), in the same time frame as Gershwin, contributed mightily to the Broadway musical repertory, most notably *Show Boat*, the first Broadway musical to enter the operatic repertory. Dennis Keene, conductor of New York's famous VOICES OF ASCENSION, arranges this familiar song from *Very Warm for May*. This unpublished arrangement is used by permission of Dennis Keene.

James Mulholland is a professor of music history, theory, and composition at Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana. Captivated by the poetry of Robert Burns, he has set many of his texts.

Bruce Neswick (b. 1956) is the Canon for Music at the Cathedral of St. Philip, Atlanta, Georgia. One of the nation's more prominent church musicians and composers, he has served several USA cathedrals. In 1990 he was the winner of the American Guild of Organists improvisation competition.

Craig Phillips (b. 1961) is Music Associate at All Saints Episcopal Church, Beverly Hills, California. He is rapidly becoming one of America's most sought-after composers of sacred choral and organ works.

Robert Shaw (1916-1999) was arguably one of Americas' finest and most valuable choral conductors, establishing new standards for American choral music. While not known as a composer of original works, his long-time collaboration with **Alice Parker** (b. 1925), arranging many pieces based on American hymnody and folk music has left a significant contribution to American choral literature.

Ronald Staheli (b. 1950) is a professor at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, where his choral program has risen to one of the top programs in universities in the USA. The setting of Robert Lowry's "How can I keep from singing?" is an indication of his facile knowledge of sonority for choruses.

Bruce Thompson (b. 1937), is Professor of Music at Winthrop University, where he teaches music theory, composition and music literature. Educated at Indiana University, he has always been keenly interested in contemporary composition and world music. *Four Persian Poetic Fragments* were composed in 2003 as a gift to the YCCS.

Randall Thompson (1899-1991) established his career as a composer and teacher in California, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey before becoming a legend at Harvard. His works for chorus are voluminous. Among the most famous are the settings of Robert Frost's poems in *Frostiana*, and the internationally famous *Alleluia*.

Alec Wyton (b. 1921) was born in London. After an Oxford education and four years at St. Matthew's, Northampton, he made his career in the USA, notably as organist for 20 years in New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine and as national president of the American Guild of Organists. His compositions include countless chants, hymns and anthems.