

CHRISTMAS MUSIC FOR ORGAN

Norman Elton, organist

December 6, 2020, 7:00 PM

Williamsburg Presbyterian Church



CHRISTMAS INTRADA

David Conte (b. 1955)

A festive medley of Christmas tunes, featuring “Ding Dong Merrily on High,” “Angels, from the Realms of Glory,” “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come,” and “Sussex Carol.”

VENITE ADOREMUS

Aaron David Miller (b. 1972)

The Latin title translates to “Come, Let us Worship,” but we know the tune to “The Snow Lay on the Ground.” Contemporary composer Aaron David Miller is known for his creative improvisations.

COLD DECEMBER FLIES AWAY

John Leavitt

A traditional Catalan carol that talks about the cold winter blowing away, yielding spring blossoms, an allusion to the birth of Christ.

GREENSLEEVES

Richard Purvis (1913 – 1994)

A mysterious, soft setting of “What Child is This.” The tune dates from at least the 16th century, being mentioned twice by Shakespeare in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It wasn’t until the 19th century that it was given the familiar text, “What Child is This.”

VOM HIMMEL KAM DER ENGEL

J. S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Bach’s setting of a Lutheran hymn, the title translates to “From Heaven Above Came the Angel Band.” This is the first of three pieces depicting angels. Bach’s angels are represented in the left hand, flowing up and down the keyboard, while the melody is played by the right hand. The feet are also slowly moving back and forth, depicting angels large and small..

LES ANGES

Olivier Messiaen (1908 – 1992)

If Bach’s angels were austere and proper, Messiaen’s angels are youthful and rambunctious. The piece is two musical lines that are constantly chasing each other around the keyboard. You can imagine them getting into all sorts of hijinx before finally fluttering away.

“HARK!” THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Neil Harmon

Messiaen not your cup of tea? Here’s a classic tune about angels, triumphantly arranged by contemporary composer Neil Harmon.

BERCEUSE PARAPHRASE ON “AWAY IN A MANGER”

George Baker (b. 1951)

A lush, meditative setting of “Away in a Manger,” featuring two different tunes associated with the text. Listen as the composer calls for them to be played simultaneously by the hands and feet. The piece builds up into complex harmonies, before coming back home towards the end.

SLEIGH RIDE

Leroy Anderson (1908 – 1975)

Ironically written in the midst of a July heatwave, Leroy Anderson’s classic has become a holiday icon! Here, it is arranged by British organist Thomas Trotter.

GRAND FANTASIA ON “JOY TO THE WORLD”

Marc Cheban

An over-the-top celebration of this Christmas staple. Written for the Longwood Gardens Christmas celebration, where an enormous pipe resides in the conservatory once owned by Pierre du Pont.

IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR

Craig Phillips (b. 1961)

The program concludes with a serenely beautiful setting of this American carol.