

from it, or otherwise emphasize it in ways that impede motion, but to suggest that her pauses and references to the familiar constitute empty rhetorical devices—far from it! Even when playful, this is music of extraordinary depth, astonishing clarity of expression, and above all stunning beauty.

While Cohen's music often displays a rich density, a good way in might be "Nightingale and Rose," the second movement of her Partita for Chamber Orchestra. This duet for flute and cello is expertly performed by flautist Elzbieta Brandys and cellist Sebastian Bäverstam. In her remarkably extensive accompanying notes—and how nice to have the composer's perspective—Cohen states that the nightingale is rebuffed by the arrogant rose, expiring at the poignant miniature's conclusion. Brandys's fluttered final exhalation is perfectly judged, as is the scorn of Bäverstam's growled sendoffs, but listen to the components comprising each motive and phrase! Conventional conceptions of major, minor, and mode fail to capture the Protean shifts and dynamic declamations in each instrument's harmonic language. Ascents and descents, repeats and huge leaps, are all shot through with inflections that conjure and dispel nearly recognizable sonorities in rapid succession. When the two forces combine in counterpoint, the magical effect increases exponentially. This effective balancing of stasis and motion in symbiosis informs every movement, especially the playful Gigue. No matter how many clusters of tone and timbre vie for prominence, often jostling each other at lightning speed with orchestration uncannily similar to Messiaen's with all of that percussion, speed never usurps clarity and separation, as even those clouds of notes drift rather than storm by. E and A serve as pitch anchors, or rather they are objects to be continually revisited but never completely established as tonal centers.

The titular piece, again for chamber orchestra but with four movements, is aptly chosen. Cohen describes elements of the Baroque concerto under superimposition of an all-encompassing rondo form, attesting to a historical knowledge bolstering her unique approach to composition. As with Berg's *Wozzeck*, the overall form and structural elements may be less important to follow on initial listening than to simply allow immersion in the work's drama, and there is plenty! Certainly, the string writing, often solo or in paired pizzicato, does evoke the Baroque, but the orchestral context is just as often indicative of Ligeti or Penderecki, brimming with swoops and slides that attain sonoric resolution. Such moments of achievement imbue Cohen's music on a regular basis. Hearing the opening movement's final open fifths engenders a kind of backward listening that gives the movement a completely different trajectory in hindsight. They pave the way for the nearly canonic repetition of the fourth movement. The series from which this four-part suite hails is called *Prophecies*, and the two installments on offer here make me very curious to hear those not yet recorded.

In rereading my opening comments, I have done Cohen's music inadvertent disservice. I have cast it in dualistic terms, but it really redefines and defies them. This is perfumed music, jasmine scented music, like Scriabin or even Sorabji, but it also has tinges of Medtner's organic unity in flux. There is absolutely no way to do this double-disc set justice in a review. Despite informative annotations, each gesture is worthy of analysis, so unpredictable but emotionally resonant are Cohen's conceptions. Listen to the timbrally inclusive *Sacred Triptych* to hear how skillfully Cohen manages color in context, or the final movement of her string quartet for a fascinating take on recitative. Though I singled out two soloists for mention above, there is not a lackluster performance here, and everyone deserves any plaudits received. My only complaint is with a somewhat distant recording, certainly more than just adequate, but a closer perspective would have afforded that last ounce of detail about which Cohen is so particular. Grumbling aside, this set is a wonderful tribute to Cohen's 30 years here in the United States. May there be many more! **Marc Medwin**

Interview with Conductor Mark Doerries

BY KEN MELTZER

Magnificat: Evening Prayer with the Notre Dame Children's Choir, a new recording on the ArsIs label, features the ensemble under the leadership of its Conductor and Artistic Director, Mark Doerries. I spoke with Mark Doerries about his career, his work with the Notre Dame Children's

Choir, and this beautiful new recording.

Please tell our readers about your background, and the path that brought you to the University of Notre Dame.

I took a circuitous path to my work with the Notre Dame Children's Choir and teaching at Sacred Music at Notre Dame. I majored in biology, specifically deep-sea invertebrate ecology, and music at the College of William and Mary; I was fortunate to work in a laboratory that explored hydrothermal vent ecosystems at faults of tectonic plates in the Atlantic Ocean. I was privileged to dive in the Alvin submersible to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean to study the Blakeridge methane seep and the animals that lived miles beneath the ocean's surface.

It was only in my final semester of college that I decided to seek additional studies in music. I moved to New York City and studied music theory at the City University of New York (Queens College) and then moved to Philadelphia to study choral conducting at Temple University. While at Temple I became interested in multisensory music performance, the combination of music with video, movement, theater, and visual art. I founded the Luminescence Project, a semi-professional group of singers that partnered with visual artists and choreographers to create multidisciplinary performances. The ensemble gave performances with laser lights, staged oratorios by William Grant Still, and gave a performance of the J. S. Bach *St. John Passion* recomposed for electric guitars and amplified singers.

I completed my Doctorate of Music at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where I studied choral conducting, prepared opera choruses, and worked with early and new-music ensembles. After teaching at a small college in Illinois (Olney Central College), I was hired by the University of Notre Dame to establish a children's choral education program and to train graduate students to work with children. Having had little experience prior to Notre Dame in working with children, I enrolled in a summer Kodály workshop. The educators I encountered at the workshop convinced me that many of music's most expressive artists are educators; the act of teaching is a unique and ephemeral performance.

Over the past seven years at the University of Notre Dame I have devoted my time to build the Notre Dame Children's Choir and to education a generation of choral conductors to train children to sing the music of Palestrina, Mozart, Bach, and Britten. I am now the Head of the Graduate Conducting Program and the Acting Director of Sacred Music at Notre Dame.

In addition to your work with the Notre Dame Children's Choir, what are some of your other responsibilities at the University?

In addition to serving as the Artistic Director of the Notre Dame Children's Choir, I am the Head of the Choral Conducting Graduate Program for Sacred Music at Notre Dame (we offer a Masters in Sacred Music (MSM) and a Doctorate of Musical Arts (DMA) in Choral Conducting). Sacred Music at Notre Dame specializes in training graduate-level conductors, organists, and vocalists to serve as professional church, university, and community musicians who are also trained to work with children as expressive artists. I teach courses in conducting, choral literature, music education, coach students through graduate degree recitals, and mentor students leading ensembles of the Notre Dame Children's Choir.

Magnificat: Evening Prayer with the Notre Dame Children's Choir is your fourth recording with the ensemble. Tell us a bit about the previous three discs.

In 2014 the Notre Dame Children's Choir commissioned a jazz Advent and Christmas cantata from Grammy-winning pianist and composer J. J. Wright titled *O Emmanuel*. Premiered in December of 2014 and released commercially in October of 2015, *O Emmanuel* debuted at No. 1 on Billboard's Chart of Traditional Classical Music, pushing out the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Joyce DiDonato, and the Three Tenors, and remained in the top 10 for eight weeks. The work fuses Gregorian chant, hymnody, and jazz styles. The Choir's second album, released in 2016, *O Day of Peace*, is a collection of hymn arrangements and short anthem sung regularly by the ensemble. In 2018 the Notre Dame Children's Choir collaborated with 10-time Grammy winning trumpeter Arturo Sandoval to record and release *Arturo Sandoval's Christmas at Notre Dame*. The album debuted at No. 2 on Billboard's Chart of Jazz Music; the choir and Sandoval performed a holiday con-

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cert to a sold-out audience at Los Angeles's Walt Disney Concert Hall.

The Notre Dame Children's Choir, formed in 2013, already has a remarkably impressive catalog of accomplishments in performing (including extensive touring), recording, and the commission and premiering of works. Please tell us about the history, mission, and accomplishments of this ensemble.

I was hired by the University of Notre Dame in 2013 to form the Notre Dame Children's Choir for two primary purposes. The first goal is to raise the level of sacred and classical music performance in the wider Notre Dame community by investing in the next generation of choral musicians. This is a long-term approach to increasing the level of music performance and music appreciation in our community. The Notre Dame Children's Choir is a free after-school program of up to three days a week for over 300 children in our community. The program's primary ensembles are 10 community-based choirs for children ages 1–18, but we also have choirs in schools and local churches to reach as many different parts of the greater Notre Dame community as possible.

The second goal of the Notre Dame Children's Choir is to train graduate student conductors and vocalists to be music educators and train children to be high-level musicians. The directors of the Notre Dame Children's Choir study conducting, voice, and music education in the classroom, and then put these ideas into practice with their individual children's choirs. I believe that all performers have a responsibility to educate the next generation of musicians, and that the best performers are educators and the best educators also perform. Zoltán Kodály's model of the performer-educator resonates powerfully with me. It is a mission of mine to convince performers and professional musicians of our obligation to educate and inspire the next generation of musicians; that our greatest musicians must also be engaging teachers.

What is the scope of repertoire the Choir studies and performs? Is secular music a part of that repertoire?

The classical canon of choral music is filled with music specifically written for child soprano choristers. Palestrina, Tallis, Byrd, Victoria, Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Britten, Holst, Vaughan Williams, and more all composed for ensembles comprised of children and adults. In England this tradition continues in the major cathedrals and community choirs, yet in the United States only a select few music programs support this tradition. Through the Notre Dame Children's Choir I hope to reinvigorate this intergenerational choral tradition in the United States, to reclaim the music originally composed for young voices, and to showcase the remarkable level child musicians can reach with a thoughtful musical education and adult performer-mentors.

As a graduate student taking music history and theory classes as well as choral literature courses, the notion that there were boy choristers in the choirs performing under Palestrina and Bach was suggested, but it was always clear that adults were the only singers who could accurately and convincingly perform this music today. It took traveling to and working with cathedral choirs in England to discover that the tradition of children singing this music is alive and well, and that children singing this music is emotionally profound.

While the majority of our performed music is sacred, we are not limited to Western European music. The Notre Dame Children's Choir has an ensemble dedicated to the music of African American composers that regularly sings gospel music, spirituals, and jazz. Our younger choirs often begin by learning American folk songs and nursery rhymes in addition to simple hymns and canons, as this music is foundational material for children learning to sing, read music, and express their feelings.

One of our missions is to commission new music for children's voices. The two composers on our latest album, *Magnificat: Evening Prayer with the Notre Dame Children's Choir*, Daniel Justin and John Duggan, are composers from England who are steeped in the child-adult choral tradition. We also commissioned Pulitzer-Prize recipient Caroline Shaw, who wrote a piece for children's choir and string quartet, *I Living Green*, as a companion piece to *By and By*. We have collaborated with jazz composers and GRAMMY-winning artists Arturo Sandoval and J. J. Wright, as well as more traditional choral composers Stephen Mager and Mark Miller.

What is the process for becoming a member of the Choir? Tell us also about the range of ages and backgrounds of your choristers.

Each fall the Notre Dame Children's Choir holds auditions for new members. Singers aged six

and younger simply register on a first-come-first-serve basis, but children ages seven to 17 register to sing for one of our directors. We warm up the voices to hear their ranges, vocal timbre, and agility, teach them a canon to determine whether they can hold their own part in a group, and assess their music reading ability. From here, applicants are placed into ensembles based on their age and ability level. We try to accept every singer who applies up to our numerical threshold. I believe that, with the right training and support, every child can learn to sing, read, and express music. We developed a choir for singers with special needs called the Lyric Choir for Singers with Mixed Abilities to accommodate siblings of our choristers who may have physical or intellectual disabilities. This ensemble pairs singers with disabilities alongside singers from our other choirs, so that all who wish to sing may participate.

Our Liturgical Choir is an auditioned ensemble of 20 to 30 treble choristers (boys and girls) who sight-read music adeptly and 12 adult alto, tenor, and bass singers. In the model of the English cathedral choir, these choristers rehearse polyphonic music for Mass or vespers liturgies only one to two rehearsals in advance. They must sight-read the music correctly almost upon the first reading of the music, so that we move to expression and interpretation quickly. The Notre Dame Children's Choir Liturgical Choir spent a week in England in the summer of 2019 singing alongside child and adult choristers in Leeds and Liverpool Cathedrals for daily Mass and Vespers.

A mentor of mine as a graduate student, Dr. Tram Sparks, shared with me advice that I call upon every day when teaching children and graduate students: constant, gentle pressure, the notion that to reach high achievements it takes consistent instruction, compassionate mentorship and teaching, and constructive pressure. We set high, though attainable, goals for our directors and singers and then provide the support they need to meet and exceed these expectations.

When is the Choir's rehearsal/concert season, and how often does the Choir perform each year?

The oldest ensembles of the Notre Dame Children's Choir, the Chamber, Seraphim, and Liturgical Choirs can perform 30–40 events each year between concerts and liturgies. Our younger choirs sing publicly only three to four times a year. We hold a fall concert at the local farmer's market (an event I modeled upon the Indiana University Children's Choir, where I began working with children singers), a Christmas Lessons and Carols concert, a winter concert in early March, and a Community Festival where we invite children in the community to join the choir for a weekend, sing under the direction of guest conductors and educators, and perform a concert with the Notre Dame Children's Choir.

It must be gratifying to be able to teach, and collaborate with, such gifted and motivated young people.

I was trained to work with adult singers at the university, opera, and community chorus levels. Working with children's voices was considered beneath professionally oriented conductors, yet my work with the Notre Dame Children's Choir is one of the most fulfilling aspects of my career. Child choristers perform with an intensity of spirit unmarred by the pitfalls of adult life. My career is fulfilling because of the balance between training young choristers, educating graduate-student choral conductors, and working with university level choral ensembles.

Please tell us about the repertoire included in Magnificat: Evening Prayer with the Notre Dame Children's Choir, and the featured composers.

The music included on *Magnificat: Evening Prayer with the Notre Dame Children's Choir* was commissioned by the Choir over the past two years. I met Daniel Justin while he was an organist and assistant conductor of the choirs at Leeds Cathedral in the UK. He regularly composed music for liturgies well suited for the tessitura of child singers and full of an energy that arises from an improvisatory vivaciousness. We first published a Mass setting of his as part of the Notre Dame Children's Choir Choral Series with Morningstar Music Publishers, and then engaged him to write a setting of the Episcopal Evensong.

I also met John Duggan through my visits to Leeds Cathedral. John is a former boy chorister from Westminster Cathedral in London. Trained formally in music and composition at Oxford University, John is the Composer in Residence for Leeds Cathedral. We commissioned John to write music for a Vespers liturgy; you can hear how he combines the English choral tradition with his love of chant and hints of jazz (particularly in his setting of the Magnificat).

In listening to this beautiful recording, I was struck both by the Choir's glorious singing, and

the majestic, grand acoustic. Tell us about the venue in which this recording was made.

The Notre Dame Children's Choir sings with a bright and forward vocal timbre; it is one that pierces through and permeates reverberant spaces. I learned from my colleagues in Europe that the sound of children laughing or shouting with delight on the playground is a strength and excitement that can be harnessed for soul-infiltrating music. The sound of a cathedral serves to magnify this sound; it creates a uniquely surround-sound experience. Hearing the Notre Dame Children's Choir in this environment envelopes the listener in sound. This encompassing sonic experience is the appeal of the Notre Dame Children's Choir's sound.

We recorded the Magnificat at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, a Benedictine monastery in southern Indiana, in its resonate sanctuary that dates back to the 19th century. Along with its robust Goulding and Wood organ, the Abbey's clear and warm reverberation made it a perfect match for our ensemble. The choir has visited the Archabbey in the past on tours, and the monks were generous to allow us to record over several days. The Notre Dame Children's Choir sings in several spaces on campus of the University of Notre Dame, including the Basilica of the Sacred Heart and the Church of Our Lady of Loretto, Saint Mary's College. The Notre Dame Children's Choir is part of a lineage of colleges and universities that train child choristers dating back half a millennium, and includes the Choir of King's College at Cambridge University and Christ Church Cathedral Choir of Oxford University.

In addition to the Notre Dame Children's Choir, your collaborators on this recording include organist Trevis Young, and Assistant Conductor Abigail Helbling.

The Notre Dame Children's Choir is a partnership between the community and the graduate program in sacred music at the University of Notre Dame. Abigail Helbling is a recent graduate of the Masters of Sacred Music program in choral conducting. She spent two years as my assistant conductor, leading the choir on tours, premiering new works, and recording two albums with me. Abigail believes in the mission of the Notre Dame Children's Choir, the right for all children and youth to access quality music education and performance. Abigail is now an educator in the Ohio public school system and is a testament to the idea that our best musicians are also our most important teachers.

Trevis Young is the organist for the Notre Dame Children's Choir and the Campus Minister for Music and Liturgy at Saint Mary's College, the partner women's college associated with the University of Notre Dame. Trevis has toured with the Notre Dame Children's Choir throughout the United States and England and plays for all our liturgical and concert performances. His creative registrations complement and enhance the ringing timbre of the Notre Dame Children's Choir.

What future projects are on the horizon for you and the Notre Dame Children's Choir?

The Notre Dame Children's Choir has commissioned a jazz setting of the Passion text from Grammy-winning pianist and composer J. J. Wright, who previously composed a jazz Advent and Christmas cantata for the choir. We will premiere this in April of 2020 and hope to tour the East Coast in the summer of 2021 as part of our album release tour.

MAGNIFICAT: Evening Prayer with the Notre Dame Children's Choir • Mark Doerries, cond; Notre Dame Children's Ch; Trevis Young (org) • ARSIS 183 (47:56)

PARRATT Holy Father, Cheer our Way. JUSTIN Preces & Responses. Phos Hilarion. Psalm 24. Magnificat. Nunc dimittis. Lesser Litany, Prayers, Collects. MAWBY I will lift up mine eyes. TALLIS Praise to Thee (Tallis Canon). ANONYMOUS Introductory Verse. Short Responsory. DUGGAN O Gloriosa Virginum. Canticle. Magnificat. Ave Maris Stella. O Crux, ave

Evensong is a magical service, a time dominated by the Magnificat and *Nunc dimittis*. A recent disc by St. John's College, Cambridge under Andrew Nethsingha on that choir's own label presents works in the great English cathedral tradition: Stanford, Kenneth Leighton, Sumsion, Gabriel Jackson, and Tippett are all present and correct. The present offering hails not from the relatively nearby Paris Notre Dame, but Notre Dame University, Indiana (also known as the University of Notre Dame du Lac). It presents a succession of commissioned Vespers and Evensong liturgies conducted by the acting Director of Sacred Music at Notre Dame, Dr. Mark Doerries. It's a pity there are no booklet notes whatsoever on the physical product, and nothing is up (yet, possibly) at the Arsis website.

Nevertheless, this is clearly a well-disciplined choir. The disc is divided into two, an "Evensong

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