

THE ROSE

The Genesee Chorale

Ric Jones, Music Director

Doug Hanson, Accompanist

|



December 2, 2016

7:00 PM

Our Lady of Mercy

44 Lake Street

Leroy, NY 14482

December 9, 2016

7:00 PM

St. James Episcopal Church

405 East Main Street

Batavia, NY 14020

This concert is made possible, in part with funds from the Decentralization Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts, administered by the Genesee Regional Arts Council.

It is my pleasure to welcome you here this evening. The Genesee Chorale has worked diligently since early September to put this program together.

In putting this program together, I wanted to musically examine the symbolism of the rose. Over the centuries, roses have symbolized a variety of things to various cultures, religions, and societies. One shared translation is that it has always been a timeless symbol of love, beauty, and balance.

In Greek mythology, the rose is associated with Aphrodite, the goddess of love, who was often depicted adorned with roses around her head, feet and or neck. In ancient Egypt, the rose is considered a symbol of balance. It expresses promise, new beginnings, and hope. Its thorns represent defense, physicality, loss, and thoughtlessness. In Rome, a wild rose would be placed on the door of a room where secret or confidential matters were discussed. The phrase *sub rosa*, or “under the rose”, still suggests something secretive, and is derived from the aforementioned Roman practice.

Medieval Christians claimed the rose as an important symbol, one most readily identifiable in architecture, stained glass, and art. In Medieval times, the five petals of the rose were used to signify to the five wounds of Christ. Later, the white rose was adopted to represent the Virgin Mary; the word “rosary” derives from this as well. On the other hand, red roses were, in time, adopted as a symbol of deep and even pious love, especially of the blood of the Christian martyrs. In contemporary times, red roses still signify deep love and affection. In fact, a bouquet of red roses, often used as a gift on Valentine’s Day, is an old symbol, allegedly first used to honor the Christian Saint, Valentinus.

St. Ambrose, a Catholic saint, explored the symbolism of the rose as well. According to church history, he related how the rose came to have thorns: Before it became one of the flowers of the earth, the rose grew thornless in Paradise. Only after the Fall of Man did the rose grow thorns, and they did so to remind man of the sins he had committed and his fall from grace; whereas its fragrance and beauty continued to remind him of the

splendor of Paradise. It is probably in reference to this that the Virgin Mary is called a 'rose without thorns,' because she alone is considered the only mortal exempt from Original Sin.

Art bears the symbolism of the rose in one time period after another. In Renaissance art, a garland of roses is often an allusion to the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin. The Glastonbury [also called the Christmas Rose] Rose is both the symbol for the Mother of God and for the Infant King, "Who didst come to earth to be crowned with thorns as part of His Passion and Death whereby He renders atonement to God the Father for the sins of men, in order to win their redemption." The Glastonbury rose is an exquisite flower, but it also bears the sharpest of thorns, like those that were braided into Jesus' Passion crown. Moreover, this special Rose, which blooms just before dawn on January 6, on the very Feast of Epiphany. Theology explains that nothing is coincidental with God, including this particular rose.

Before the Glastonbury rose, Christians drew Mystical roses like a pointed star and crafted beautiful stain glass windows depicting roses. They still do. Some quilters work entire quilts with the theme; there is even a Mystical Rose quilt template.

Wreaths of roses worn by Angels and Saints are indicative of heavenly joy. In accordance with a very ancient custom dating as far back as the time of Pope Gregory I, the sending of a golden rose by the Pope to people of distinction is a symbol of special papal benediction. An apron full of roses is an attribute of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, while a basket of roses and apples is used to identify St. Dorothea of Cappadocia.

Tonight's program will explore these and other interpretations of the rose, many of which stray far from what you might expect in a Christmas program. Yet our goal was to invite you to reflect upon the meaning of the spirit of Christmas in a new way—as a story that transcends the birth story of Christ. I hope you find tonight's program both reflective and inspiring.

~Ric Jones

Angels We Have Heard on High arr. David Cherwien

Les Chansons des Roses Morten Lauridsen

En Une Seule Fleur
Contre Qui, Rose
De Ton Reve Trop Plein
La Rose Complete
Dirait-On

-Brief intermission-

Glow Eric Whitacre

See Amid the Winter's Snow arr. Dan Forrest

Go, Tell It On The Mountain arr. Stacey V. Gibbs

The Rose of Midnight Z. Randall Stroope

Lo, How A Rose/The Rose arr. Craig Hella Johnson
Janine Fagnan, soloist

O Holy Night arr. René Clausen

Let There Be Peace on Earth arr. Craig Courtney
Featuring Peggy Thomas, Merry Lou Holley, Fran Thomas, Mark
Christensen

I. En une seule fleur: In a Single Flower

Lauridsen's music is based upon a collection of poems "The Songs of the Rose," written by the German poet Rilke, who, similar to the composer, spent many years in solitude and deep reflection. His rose poems are considered a literary "conceit"—that is, an extended metaphor contemplating a single image in multiple, unique ways. This first poem presents a group of speakers (here, the speakers reach the conclusion that Christ embodies the rose because He bore without question the suffering humans asked of Him).

<i>C'est pourtant nous qui t'avons propose de remplir ton calice. Enchantee de cet artifice, ton abondance Pavait ose. Tu itais assez riche, pour devenir cent fois toi-meme en une seule fleur;</i>	It is we, perhaps, who proposed that you replenish your bloom. Enchanted by this charade, your abundance dared. You were rich enough to fulfill yourself a hundred times over in a single flower; such is the state of one who loves...
<i>c'est fitat de celui qui aime...</i>	but you never did think otherwise.
<i>Mais to n'as pas pense ailleurs.</i>	

II. Contre qui, rose: Against Whom, Rose?

In this second poem, the symbol shifts. This time, the rose is the mortal man, while the speaker is Christ. Here, Christ chastises mankind for his defensive nature, suggesting that it is mankind's armor that keeps him from the fruits of the spirit he might otherwise enjoy.

<i>Contre qui, rose, avez-vous adopte ces epines? Votre joie trop fine vous a-t-elle forcie de devenir cette chose armee?</i>	Against whom, rose, have you assumed these thorns? Is it your too fragile joy that forced you to become this armed thing?
<i>Mais de qui vous protégé cette arme exageree?</i>	But from whom does it protect you, this exaggerated defense?

*Combien d'ennemis vous ai-je
Enlevés
qui ne la craignaient point?
Au contraire, delà en automne,

vous blessez les soins
qu'on vous donne.*

How many enemies have I
lifted from you
who did not fear it at all?
On the contrary, from summer
to autumn
you wound the affection
that is given you.

III. De ton reve trop plein: Overflowing with your dream

In Rilke's third poem, we are meant to examine the physical rose itself as a human seeking God. The bowing flower unfolding its petals slowly in the mist suggests a person not yet spiritually connected to God, yet as one who deeply longs for such connection, embodied here in petal on petal folded in upon itself, as though it knows intuitively it will find what it seeks within its own heart.

*De ton reve trop plein,
fleur en dedans nombreuse,
mouillée comme une pleureuse,
to te penches sur le matin.
Tes douces forces qui dorment,

dans un desir incertain,
developpent ces tendres forms
entre joues et seins.*

Overflowing with your dream,
flower filled with flowers,
wet as one who weeps,
you bow to the morning.
Your sweet powers which still
are Sleeping
in misty desire,
unfold these tender forms
joining cheeks and breasts.

IV. La rose complete: The Perfect Rose

Here, in the fourth poem of the series, joy. Awareness. Deep and awesome awareness of the presence of the spirit within oneself; the perfect rose, Christ; the speaker, the human aware that he is not alone.

*J'ai une telle conscience de ton
être, rose complete,
que mon consentement te confound
avec mon coeur en fête.
Je te respire comme si tu étais,
rose, toute la vie,
et je me sens l'ami parfait
d'une telle amie.*

I have such awareness of your
being, perfect rose,
that my will unites you
with my heart in celebration.
I breathe you in, rose, as if you
were all of life,
and I feel the perfect friend
of a perfect friend.

V. Dirait-on: It Is Said

The final poem presented in the series, “It is Said” is ultimately a play on the word “conceit.” Normally, we think of the word with its negative connotations—as vanity. As Narcissistic, like the Greek god Narcissus. But remember: Rilke’s poem is a *literary* conceit: a series of complicated comparisons, yet all based in the same image. It ends unexpectedly: with Narcissus fulfilled (the Greek god was no such thing—he was the embodiment of loneliness!). Perhaps the poet is suggesting that the only way we can truly find fulfillment is if we become like the rose we’ve been contemplating all this time: End our solitary reverie and become one with the Spirit of the Rose. Celebrate the Christmas Season by letting go of the notion that we were ever alone, and embrace the gift of tenderness and perfect love.

Abandon entoure d'abandon,

Abandon surrounding
abandon,

tendresse touchant aux tendresses...

tenderness touching tenderness...

*C'est ton interieur qui sans cesse
se caresse, dirait-on;*

Your oneness endlessly
caresses itself, so they say;
self-caressing

se caresse en soi-meme,

through its own clear reflection.

par son propre reflet eclaire.

Thus you invent the theme
of Narcissus fulfilled.

Ainsi to inventes le theme

du Narcisse exauce.

Glow

Eric Whitacre is America's most popular choral composer today, and his works are beloved by choirs throughout the world. Simple and welcoming, *Glow* was performed for the first time by the World of Color Honor Choir at Disney's California Adventure Park. This contemplative work paints a beautiful picture of winter as an extended metaphor, each image comparing the snow to something symbolic: as a Voice from the sky waking a slumbering world; as a peaceful Sea; as a Sparrow joyously welcoming the season; and finally, as a vision of the rarely seen Northern Lights. The final line of the refrain, “Glow, like the softly falling snow,” invites us to be one with the snow and all the majesty and beauty signified therein.

Softly falls the winter snow,

Whispers to the sleeping world below:

"Winter tide awakes,"

Morning breaks and sets the Earth aglow.

In gentle tones of warmest white,

Proclaim the glory of Aurora's light.

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Sparrow sings in a clear, clean voice,
A sweet silver carol for the season born.

Radiant wings as the skies rejoice,
Arise and illuminate the morn.

Softly falls the morning snow,
Whispers to the sleeping world below:
"Glow, like the softly falling snow."

See Amid the Winter's Snow

This song invites the reader to embrace the stark contrast of cold and warmth that Christmas embodies: the stark and cold state of winter itself against the warm imagery of the tender and eternal lamb. The lyrics are a constant dichotomy of opposites: happy dawn and morn; a baby on earth; and far above, among angels, One upon a throne. The lyrics present the clear love and gift of Christmas—a God willing to even visit such a world as ours; and further, to do such a significant contrast from that high and distant throne: a vulnerable baby, in the cold, and in so humble an abode.

See amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below,
See the tender Lamb appears,
Promised from eternal years.

Hail, thou ever-blessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem. Alleluia.

Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies;
He, who throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim.

Sacred infant, all divine,
What a tender love was thine,

Thus to come from highest bliss,
Down to such a world as this.

The Rose of Midnight

The lyrics of this piece come from American poet Vachel Lindsey, who compares the sky to a pastoral garden paradise: the moon first an opening flower, and the dark night the bluff of a cliff at the edge of a sea; the moon next a silver rose “her pollen...the dew”; from there the imagery becomes mysterious and magical, a dreamlike fantasy where the dew becomes rain; the rain becomes a stream; the moon then wreathed in a heavenly mist. Here the poem shifts, and the imagery examines the effect that the sky has upon world, suggesting that such a vision creates a spiritual space within us. Our hearts become “like honeycomb,” offering an image of room upon room, patiently waiting to be filled by the sweet nectar of the rose at midnight. The closing lines offer the rose’s sweetest honey yet: the baptism of new life (the “April rain”) and the Rose’s pollen “eternal life.” The final line reveals eternal life as a “cup of peace...a million times from Death;” the night sky, the stars, the earth, and the moon an ever present reminder of the continuation of Life.

The moon is now an op'ning flower; The sky a cliff of blue.
The moon is now a silver rose; Her pollen is the dew.
Her pollen is the mist that swings
Across her face of dreams.
Her pollen is the April rain,
Filling April streams.
Her pollen is eternal life
It feeds the swarming stars
And fills their hearts with honeycomb.
The moon is now an op'ning flower, The sky a cliff of blue.
The moon is now a silver rose; Her pollen is the dew;
Her pollen is the April rain,
Her pollen is eternal life,
Ambrosial foam. This cup of peace
This silver rose bending with fairy breath
Shall lift that passion flower, the earth
A million times from death.

O HOLY NIGHT

Refrain:

Fall on your knees,
O hear the angel voices!
O night divine,
O night when Christ was born.
O night, O holy night,
O night divine.

LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH

Verse 1 (Chorale alone)

Verse 2 (Chorale alone):

Verse 3 (all sing):

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me;
Let there be peace on earth,
The peace that was meant to be.
With God our creator,
Children all are we.
Let us walk with each other
In perfect harmony.

Verse 4 (all sing):

Let peace begin with me,
let this be the moment now.
With every step I take,
Let this be my solemn vow;
To take each moment and live each moment
In peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.

Soprano

Marsha Coy*
Phyllis Draycott
Joan Ellison
Alice Fedrigo
Yvonne Freeman
Kathy Friedman
Barb Galliford
Wilma Hively
Merry Lou Holley+
Sharon Larsen
Heather Lovelace*
Lois Nicholson
Barbara Pierce
Pamm Seifert
Sharon Stanley
Peggy Thomas

Alto

Marie Barcomb
Patti Bartz
Jane Christensen
Deborah Davis
Patty Drew+
Janine Fagnan*
Linda Fry
Cindy Furman
Pat Fussell
Nancy Hoag*
Karen Jones
Elizabeth Kerwin
Amy Perl*
Lilo Townsend
Caryn Wood

Tenor

Alan Barcomb+*
Beth Boyce
Tom Cox
Lynn Lomanto*
Anne Ortwein
Mark Ross
Eric Wood

Bass

John Allen
Philip Briatico
Mark Christensen+*
Jim Ellison*
Charles Gould
Robert Holley
Darrel Oakes
Francis Thomas

+ Section leader

* Genesee Chorale Board member

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For your continual support of The Genesee Chorale and all culture in Genesee and Orleans counties. Without your support our 45 years of bringing choral music to Batavia and surrounding communities would not be possible.

DENNIS MELANDER

For providing the piano for our Leroy concert and for your continued support of The Genesee Chorale.

ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

We are proud to call St. James Episcopal Church our home. Thank you for your generosity, patience, and hospitality.

BARB KING

For your patience and kindness in helping with all of our logistics at St. James Episcopal Church.

THE GENESEE CHORALE BOARD MEMBERS

For their time commitments and incredible dedication to our organization.