

The Choirmaster's Column

Saint-Saëns Requiem & Music for Holy Week

The *Requiem, Op. 54* by Camille Saint-Saëns will be presented on Sunday, April 7 at the 10:00 am service. The presentation of a complete Requiem a week prior to Palm Sunday is a significant part of what the choir prepares after the Advent Concert. There will be an outstanding group of instrumentalists joining the choir at the April 7th service.

Camille Saint-Saëns was born in Paris in 1835 and died in Algiers in 1921. The *Requiem in C minor* was published and premiered in 1878 and was composed in only eight days! It was written in honor of Saint-Saëns' good friend and benefactor, Albert Libon, who left 100,000 francs to Saint-Saëns in his will. Two terrible personal tragedies for Saint-Saëns followed within weeks of the premier of his Requiem. Not unlike the Mozart Requiem, the composing of a Requiem and a personal tragedy make a startling coincidence. There will be more details at the Forum on March 31st. The Saint-Saëns Requiem is composed in eight movements. The texts come from the traditional Requiem Mass and will be sung entirely in Latin. There will be a Latin/English translation in the April 7th bulletin. The Saint-Saëns Requiem is a choral masterpiece and is a great opportunity for our choir to present a work that is not frequently performed. Please invite family and friends to this extraordinary service!

April 14th is Palm Sunday. The Senior Choir and Scholars will be singing the sixth movement, "*Thou knowest, Lord*," from the *Requiem* by Bob Chilcott. Composed in 2010, Bob Chilcott remains one of England's most successful contemporary sacred music composers. The text has been taken from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

On Maundy Thursday, April 18th, the choir will offer William Byrd's (1540-1623) beautiful setting of the *Ave verum corpus* text. There have been many settings of this text, most notably by Mozart. Byrd's setting offers his sensitivity to tone painting in which the harmonic changes directly reflect the emotional depth of the text. Byrd as an exponent of the late Renaissance also composes with his masterful contrapuntal weaving of the four parts of the choir.

Our soloists will be featured on Good Friday, April 19th, beginning at 12 noon in stunning a cappella Renaissance motets. The motets include Marc Antonio Ingegneris' "*Tenebrae factae sunt*," Roland de Lassus' "*Inimici autem*," Giovanni Palestrina's "*Adoramus te*," and Tomás Luis de Victoria's "*Vere languores nostros*." The soloists will be singing from the balcony. These Good Friday services are a wonderful opportunity to experience the varied and deeply emotional music written for this solemn day.

The Easter Vigil service is Saturday, April 20th at 8:00 pm. It is an incredibly moving and beautiful service. Anastasia Swope's chanting of the Exsultet is truly a highlight of Holy Week. The choir will sing John Taverner's (c. 1490-1545) setting of "*Dum transisset Sabbatum*." Taverner is able to capture the beauty and mystery of this moment. Utilizing the timeless nature of plainchant within his creation of the soaring and sustained lines of each of the five parts.

The Latin text in translation:

And when the sabbath was past, Mary
Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and

Salome brought spices, that they might anoint
Jesus. Alleluia.

And very early on the sabbath they came to
the sepulchre, at the rising of the sun, that
they might anoint Jesus. Alleluia.

Easter Sunday is April 21st. The 9:30 am Family Service features the Cherub, Junior, and Youth Choirs with the Senior Choir joining the service for Händel's "*Hallelujah Chorus*." At the 11:15 am service the Senior Choir will sing John Rutter's "*Christ the Lord is risen again*," which was composed in 1971. The "Hallelujah Chorus," along with instrumental offerings for trumpet, oboe and organ, will be presented at both services.

Garah Landes