

13TH THIRTEEN

MATTHEW ROBERTSON ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

*SILENT NIGHT
STARRY NIGHT*

DECEMBER 20-22, 2019

CONDUCTOR'S NOTE

Happy holidays! I'm so glad that you've joined us on an exploration of the cosmos and the Christmas story.

This season, *Through the Looking-Glass*, draws its inspiration from Lewis Carroll's novel, in which the protagonist climbs through a mirror and enters a fantastical world with new perspectives. Tonight's concert explores the intersection between the cosmos and the story of Christmas. I'm particularly excited to look upward this year, as humanity celebrates the 50th anniversary of the moon landing. I'm struck that as fantastical as the look towards space is, perhaps the Christmas story is no less wondrous.

Tonight's repertoire will take us through a millennium and across an ocean. It tells a tale in three scenes: from prophetic rumblings, to the stars, and finally to an intimate vision of the holiday story. At the core of tonight's concert is Kile Smith's *The Consolation of Apollo*, which features the words of Apollo 8's astronauts broadcasting above the earth on Christmas Eve, and the World Premiere of Melissa Dumphy's *The Apotheosis of Apollo*, commissioned for The Thirteen by Clint & Missy Kelly, which explores our impulse for exploration.

The birth narrative and humankind's journey into the unknown both exemplify one of the best attributes of our shared humanity: our capacity for hope. It is my hope that this concert will transport you to the stars and to the manger; that it may be a light for you this season.

—Matthew Robertson

We invite you to take photographs (without flash) and to use social media during the concert.

We politely decline unauthorized audio or video recordings of our concerts.

Please silence all cell phones and other noisemaking devices.

The Thirteen gratefully thanks our season sponsors, J. Penny Clark and Charles Cerf & Cindy Dunbar.

THE
THIRTEEN

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#bakersdozen

TheThirteenChoir.org

CONCERT SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2019
7:30PM

Episcopal High School Chapel
1200 North Quaker Lane
Alexandria, VA 22302

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2019
7:30PM

Live at 10th & G
First Congregational U.C.C
945 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2019
5:00PM

Bradley Hills Church
6601 Bradley Boulevard
Bethesda, MD 20817

SILENT NIGHT, STARRY NIGHT

Judicii Signum

Videntes stellam, No. III from *Quatre Mores pour le Temps de Noël*
O Come, O Come Emmanuel
10th Century Catalan Chant, arr. Andrew Megill (b. 1965)
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)
arr. Joseph Jennings (b. 1954)

dayspring, come

where stars are spun

The Consolation of Apollo

Washington, D.C. Premiere

- I. Thou may'st know, if thou wilt notice
- II. Yes, it's beautiful
- III. Wings are mine
- IV. The Sea of Tranquility
- V. While the bright sun
- VI. In the beginning
- VII. The stars shine

The Apotheosis of Apollo

World Premiere

Melissa Dunphy (b. 1980)

This commission is made possible by the generosity of Clint and Missy Kelly.

brief intermission

I wonder as I wander

John Jacob Niles (1891-1980); arr. Steve Pilkington (b. 1956)

softly now

Un Flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle

Away in a Manger

Silent Night

Stephen Hatfield (b. 1956)
arr. Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)
arr. Matthew Robertson (b. 1986)

The Thirteen gratefully thanks tonight's Concert Sponsors, Clint & Missy Kelly.

PROGRAM NOTES

Judicii Signum

arr. A. McGill

Originally a Latin hymn, *Judicii Signum* has a long association with Catalonia, and most iterations of this text surviving after the 13th century are in Catalan. A prophecy telling of the day of judgement, or apocalypse, versions of this text have been chanted in Catalan churches on Christmas eve without interruption since the 13th century.

Videntes stellam, No. III; from *Quatre Motets pour le Temps de Noël*

F. Poulenc

Francis Poulenc was a member of the renowned group of French Composers called *Les Six*, whose members aimed to break away from Germanic formality and French impressionism in favor of a simpler and more accessible style. This beautiful and simple carol reflects upon the story of the journey of the wise men to find Christ, following the star in the heavens and bringing the child gifts.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

arr. J. Jennings

Another ancient hymn, the origins of *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* are difficult to trace. The text is an amalgam of the *O Antiphons*, which foreshadow the coming of Christ and originated around the 8th century. Joseph Jennings weaves the medieval roots of the hymn into the fabric of this uniquely contemporary setting of this ancient work.

The Consolation of Apollo

Washington, D.C. Premiere

Program notes provided by the composer

When [The Crossing] approached me with the idea that became *The Consolation of Apollo*, [the Philadelphia-based ensemble] The Crossing... had been looking for a companion piece to David Lang's *The Little Match Girl Passion*. They... were looking for a work, that, with the Lang, would comprise an evening's concert. So, along with an otherwise unaccompanied chorus I used some of the percussion and, significantly, the context of Christmas from the Lang work.

The spine of Apollo is... the 1968 Christmas Eve broadcast by the crew of Apollo 8, as they became the first astronauts to leave Earth's orbit, circle the moon, and photograph the entire Earth. With the transcript of their communications I interspersed selections from The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius (480–524).

Philosopher, Christian apologist, and translator of Aristotle, Boethius was one of the greatest thinkers and authors prior to the Middle Ages, combining Classical thought and theology. In the Consolation he considers good and evil, our place in creation and on fortune's wheel, and, at times, Apollo (Phaëbus), the mythical charioteer of the sun. A consul to the Ostrogoth Emperor Theodoric, he wrote this while imprisoned by Theodoric, who suspected him of

K. Smith

treason, as Boethius attempted to improve relationships with Constantinople. Boethius was executed shortly after completing the Consolation.

The Consolation is not overtly Christian and mentions God, as a higher power, only briefly. In my selections from Boethius, I attempted to highlight his appreciation of myth, but also his judgment of it as inadequate. The compelling translation/adaptation attributed to King Alfred has the rhythmic and imaginative power of Beowulf. It and the lyrical James and Cooper translations provide textured counterpoint to the Apollo 8 transmissions.

That 1968 Christmas Eve television broadcast famously (and in some quarters, infamously) included the recitation by the astronauts of the first ten verses of Genesis, “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth....” This text is mixed together with the prosaic chatter among the crew and Houston as they position the craft for what are now the iconic photos of Earth.

The setting of the prose was the tallest musical hurdle for me, as I wanted to convey the informal, even chaotic quality of the speech without sacrificing lyricism. The model that offered a solution was the sung Passion, where three singers of different ranges portray Christ, the narrator, and the crowd. I assigned Commander Frank Borman to the basses, Command Module Pilot James Lovell to the tenors, and Lunar Module Pilot William Anders to the altos. Astronaut Ken Mattingly, on the support team in Houston, is voiced together by the altos, tenors, and basses. The distance and low-quality sound of the transmission was something I wished to approximate. I was unwilling to use percussion for this purpose mainly because of the length of the text, as percussion quickly tires the ears. After rejecting some vocal techniques, I decided to employ the sopranos in a halo of pre- and post-echoes of the lower three voices.

In the Genesis reading the lower three sometimes switch this sonic role with the sopranos. Again, a hurdle in Genesis 1 is the length of a not obviously musical text. One technique I used—interesting to me, anyway, as I don’t believe I’ve used it before—is bitonality, or the sounding of two tonal centers at the same time, the idea coming from the description of God’s dividing the light from darkness, and the firmament from the waters. At one point the women are in one key, the men in another; or I combine the sopranos and basses in one key, and the altos and tenors in another.

The bass drum drives the rhythm here and there, and the crotales are mostly simple—even simplistic—bell-like heralds of the astronauts, resolving into an evocation of the sincerest of wishes for a Merry Christmas for all. This, I believe, is the emotional center of the piece.

The Apotheosis of Apollo

World Premiere

This commission is made possible by the generosity of Clint and Missy Kelly.

Program note provided by the composer.

As a teenager, long before I became a composer, I traveled one summer from my hometown in Australia to Huntsville, Alabama, to attend Advanced Space Academy at Space Camp—an unforgettable experience inspired by my fascination with science and the space program. I’ve never lost this childlike wonder for scientific exploration and discovery, and have written several musical works on topics such as the first supercomputer to play music, the scientist Nikola Tesla,

M. Dunphy

and the sounds of telecommunications in the 1980s and 1990s. So I was thrilled to be approached by Matthew Robertson to write this piece. The beauty of science is not only in its ability to identify and solve problems and bring about progress, but in its inspirational stories that can transform us as a species; the emotional impact of achievements like the 1969 moon landing resonates even among those of us who weren't yet alive to witness it in real time. As the human race continues to consider its place in our world and our universe, 50 years later, it seems particularly important—even urgent—to recall the unifying impact of that moment.

I wonder as I wander

arr. S. Pilkington

Renowned folklorist John Jacob Niles collected a fragment of this tune while working deep in Appalachia in 1933. He had encountered a camp meeting on the outskirts of Murphy, North Carolina, when: "A girl had stepped out to the edge of the little platform attached to the automobile. She began to sing. Her clothes were unbelievably dirty and ragged, and she, too, was unwashed. Her ash-blond hair hung down in long skeins. ... But, best of all, she was beautiful, and in her untutored way, she could sing. She smiled as she sang, smiled rather sadly, and sang only a single line of a song."

Un Flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle

S. Hatfield

This charming French carol tells the story of two young milkmaids, Jeannette and Isabelle, who discover the infant Christ in the stables at Bethlehem and run to tell the Shepherds to come in from the fields to see him. Originally composed as a secular song popular in taverns, the melody to this carol was likely written by prolific Baroque composer Marc-Antoine Charpentier and is the only surviving piece from a lost collection of motets for Christmas.

Awake in a Manger

arr. O. Gjelle

Norwegian composer Ola Gjelle infuses his arrangement of *Awake in a Manger* with a shimmering and mysterious wordless accompaniment, providing a seamless backdrop to his contemplative arrangement of this popular hymn. Popularly harmonized by Ralph Vaughan-Williams, the tune to this piece "Cradle Song" first emerged in the late 19th century in a collection of tunes by American composer William J. Kirkpatrick. For many years, the text of this hymn was misattributed to Martin Luther, but it has since been determined that the paraphrased text is American in origin.

Silent Night

arr. M. Robertson

In 1818, Father Mohr, a young Austrian priest, brought lyrics to schoolmaster and organist Franz Xavier Gruber in a nearby town, asking if he would compose a tune for Christmas Eve services. In the following two centuries, Silent Night has been translated into 140 languages, recorded by singers of every genre, and declared a Masterpiece of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. Robertson's arrangement of the famous carol captures the stillness and beauty of the Christmas story.

Program notes by Gilbert Spencer.

13 THIRTEEN

THE ARTISTS

Katelyn Aungst, *soprano*
Julie Bosworth, *soprano*
Rhianna Cockrell, *mezzo-soprano*
Agnes Coakley Cox, *soprano*
Janna Cruz, *mezzo-soprano*
Nathan Dougherty, *tenor*
Nathan Hodgson, *tenor*
Christopher Jackson, *bass-baritone*
Heather Kayan, *mezzo-soprano*
Brian Mummert, *baritone*
Jacob Perry, Jr., *tenor*
Edward Vogel, *baritone*

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Matthew Robertson
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Marketing & Operations Associate
Gilbert Spencer
Assistant Conductor

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13TH THIRTEEN

Praised for performing with “striking color and richness” (The Washington Post) and “a tight and attractive vocal blend and excellent choral discipline” (American Record Guide), **THE THIRTEEN** is an all-star professional ensemble known for reimagining the potential of vocal music. Since its founding in 2012, the choir has been at the forefront of invigorating performances of choral masterworks ranging from early chant to world premieres and the centuries in between.

The Thirteen draws its artists from among the finest ensembles in the world, including Chanticleer, Seraphic Fire, Apollo’s Fire, Conspirare, IFagiolini, Opera Philadelphia, Boston Early Music Festival, and Trinity Wall Street. The choir’s peerless singers are best described by National Public Radio commentator M. D. Ridge: “to talk about the remarkable abilities and sound of the individual singers would... be like trying to say which whitecaps on the ocean reflect the sun most beautifully, or which leaves on a tree dance most gracefully with the wind... I stand in awe.”

The Thirteen’s growing discography includes “Truth & Fable,” released in October 2019, “Voice Eternal,” which was pre-nominated for a Grammy® award, the critically-acclaimed Christmas album “Snow on Snow,” “RADIANT DARK,” which features the finest works of the late Tudor period and reached #28 on the iTunes Classical Charts, as well as The Thirteen’s debut recording “...to St. Cecilia.”

The Thirteen has performed and been in residency at Yale University, Bowling Green State University, Eastern Illinois University, the University of Central Oklahoma, York College, The University of Tampa, Virginia Wesleyan University, St. Ambrose University, Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, Guilford College, as well as concerts at colleges and concert series throughout the United States. In 2018 The Thirteen was awarded the Greater Washington Area Choral Excellence award for Most Creative Programming.

The Thirteen is committed to educating and inspiring the next generation of musicians, and frequently coaches students at the high school and collegiate levels in masterclass, workshop and collaborative performance sessions.

For more information about The Thirteen, please visit www.TheThirteenChoir.org.



MATTHEW ROBERTSON, praised for his “sensitive and nuanced” conducting, is acclaimed as the driving force behind the all-star professional choir, The Thirteen, and is hailed as a leader in the field. As Founder and Artistic Director of The Thirteen, he has conducted the ensemble throughout the United States and on multiple recordings.

Robertson’s 2019–2020 season with The Thirteen sees twenty performances, repertoire spanning more than half of a millennium, collaborations with many of the finest instrumentalists of his generation, and world premieres by Scott Ornday and Melissa Dunphy. Highlights of his 2019–2020 season include performances of Mozart’s *Requiem*, Handel’s *Messiah*, Monteverdi’s *The “Lost” Vespers (664)*, Ornday’s *The Outer Edge of Youth*, Kile Smith’s *The Consolation of Apollo*, and much of J.S. Bach’s oeuvre.

During the 2018–2019 season, Robertson led performances of masterworks including Handel’s *Messiah*, J.S. Bach’s *St. John Passion*, Handel’s *Dixit Dominus*, Steffani’s *Stabat Mater*, David Lang’s *the little match girl passion*, Poulenc’s *Figure Humaine*, Duruflé’s *Requiem*, served as a presenter at ACDA’s Voices United festival, and led workshops throughout the East Coast. Additionally, Robertson served on the faculty of Oberlin Conservatory’s Baroque Performance Institute, a premiere summer institute and festival dedicated to music of the Baroque.

From 2010–2012 Robertson served as Assistant Conductor for the Westminster Symphonic Choir, conducting the choir in performance and assisting in preparation for concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, for such conductors as Yannick Nezet-Seguin, Peter Schreier, Alan Gilbert and Jacques Lacombe.

Mr. Robertson was the Robert P. Fountain Scholar at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, earning a degree in Organ Performance. While at the Oberlin Conservatory he conducted the Oberlin College Choir, College Singers, Musical Union, Conservatory Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra.

Robertson received his M.Mus. in conducting from Westminster Choir College where he studied with Andrew Megill and Joc Miller. He has also worked with such luminary conductors as Norman Scribner, Stan Englebretson, Robert Spano, Joseph Flummerfelt, Gary Graden and JoAnn Falletta.

A Washington, DC native, Robertson serves as Director of Music at Bradley Hills Church, in Bethesda, MD. Additionally active as an organist, Mr. Robertson has performed throughout the United States and in Western Europe.

HOST A MUSICIAN

Did you know that many of The Thirteen's musicians are drawn from around the country? When they travel here for a concert week, they need a place to stay! To save costs and build community ties, The Thirteen asks you, our audience members, to consider opening your homes to our wonderful artists. Hosts are asked to provide a private bedroom for about six days and are offered two free tickets to one of our concerts in thanks.

For more information please speak with General Manager, Valerie Simonsen, or send her an email at valerie@thethirteenchoir.org. Thanks for your support of The Thirteen!



SUPPORT US

The Thirteen is committed to a diverse and multi-generational audience. Yet this does not always translate to financial security. The fact is, The Thirteen depends on your donation for its existence. Only 15% of our operating budget comes from ticket sales.

We ask that if you appreciate our artistry you make a commitment to The Thirteen and give as you are able. But no matter how much you give, – whether \$5 or \$5,000 – we hope you will give something. It means a great deal to us to expand our musical family. Join us in making music. What are some suggested giving levels? The Thirteen appreciates a donation of any size, but we list some milestones below. All contributors will be listed in our programs.

To donate, please visit TheThirteenChoir.org and click on “Donate,” or send your check payable to The Thirteen to:

The Thirteen
P.O. Box 32065
Washington, DC 20007

The Thirteen gratefully accepts tax-deductible donations of appreciated securities, transferred from your brokerage account directly to ours. The gifts are not only tax-deductible, but since they are transferred directly, you do not need to sell them and will not pay any capital gains tax on sales. Please contact valerie@thethirteenchoir.org for the appropriate letters and instructions to carry out this kind of donation.

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If you have made a bequest to The Thirteen, please let us know so that you can be recognized as a member of The Thirteen's *Legacy Society*. Your gift will serve as an inspiration for others.

For more information about making a gift to The Thirteen through your will or trust, or if you have already included The Thirteen in your plans, please contact Valerie Simonsen at valerie@thethirteenchoir.org.

LEGACY SOCIETY

Dr. Patricia Stocker