Presents

New York Polyphony

Geoffrey Williams, countertenor
Steven Caldicott Wilson, tenor
Christopher Dylan Herbert, baritone
Craig Phillips, bass

Sunday, December 1, 2013 at 3:00 p.m.

Exclusive Management:
Opus 3 Artists
470 Park Avenue South
9th Floor North
New York NY 10016

New York Polyphony can be heard on Avie, Indaba, and BIS Records
“Wondrous birth, O wondrous child”

Veni Redemptor Gentium* .......................... ANDREW SMITH (b. 1970)

Audivi vocem de caelo.......................... THOMAS TALLIS (1505-1585)
Adam lay ybounden* ............................ GEOFFREY WILLIAMS (b. 1976)
Veni Emmanuel* ..................................................ANDREW SMITH

Gabriel Archangelus................................. PHILIPPE VERDELOT
(c.1480 to 1485 – c.1530 to 1532)
Ave maris stella (“Taking that sweet Ave”)........ANDREW SMITH
Gabriel’s Message................................. arr. ALEXANDER CRAIG (b. 1971)

There is no Rose ..................................................TRINITY ROLL MS
There is no Rose* ........................................... JOHN SCOTT (b. 1956)

Lully, lullow: I saw a swete semly syght .........................RITSON MS
Nowell: Out of your sleep..................................SELDEN MS
Nowell: Arise and Wake* ...........................................ANDREW SMITH

O magnum mysterium ...................... T. L. DA VICTORIA (1548-1611)

Quid petis, o fili (Henry VIII’s Songbook) ..................RICHARD PYGOTT
(c. 1485 - 1549)
The Coventry Carol: ...........................................ANONYMOUS (c.1500)
Pageant of the Shearmen and the Tailors

The darkest midnight in December* ..........arr. ALEXANDER CRAIG

*Composed for New York Polyphony

The use of cameras and recording devices of any type is prohibited.
Please silence all cell phones and paging devices.
We ask that patrons please refrain from text messaging during the performance.
The *carol* has taken many forms over the course of its evolution from plainsong melodies, motets and hymns to lullabies and devotional folk songs. In the Middle Ages, carols were composed to celebrate not only the birth of the Christ-child, but for feast days throughout the entire Christian year. The Protestant Reformation ushered in the further development of the vernacular congregational hymn-carol and, with it, many of the carols in the modern canon. The carol tradition continues today in the works of many contemporary composers from perennial favorites by John Rutter and David Willcocks to instant current hits of Eric Whitacre and Morten Lauridsen.

In the vein of continuing the contemporary carol tradition, we open this sequence with a setting of the Advent Hymn “Veni Redemptor Gentium” (“Savior of the Nations Come”) composed for New York Polyphony by Andrew Smith. This tune became so influential in the Lutheran tradition that J.S. Bach based not one but two of his church cantatas on this hymn tune. In this setting, the hymn verses alternate between sung plainsong and polyphony with the tune shared by all the voices.

The *Tudor* period refers to composers who were active during the reign of the House of Tudor (1485-1603) in England, and to their general style of music, often referred to as Tudor polyphony. Tudor polyphony embraces an epoch of change and development in English music, a gradual transition from various techniques used in medieval music to complex, many-voiced polyphony. Thomas Tallis captures the essence of this music: imitation, rhythmic variation, false relations (where the movement of two parts results in a simultaneous semitone clash, a typical feature of early English renaissance polyphony), unexpected harmonies and a gift for expressing in music the essence of the text. “Audivi vocem de caelo” comes from the Sarum liturgy for All Saints’ Day and in the four single voices characterizes the wise virgins with their vessels awaiting the bridegroom symbolizing the Advent of the Christ. This leads into another new setting by Andrew Smith of the beloved plainsong hymn “Veni Emmanuel.” The story of the fall of Adam has been set to music to accompany the liturgies of the Advent season particularly in the contemporary evolution of the carol service in churches, chapels and cathedrals. “Adam lay ybounden,” a medieval carol text that has been most famously set by Benjamin Britten and Boris Ord, is recently composed here by Geoffrey Williams.

The Flemish or Flanders school, represented here by Philippe Verdelot and Jacob Clemens (“non Papa”), is a very broad category for the collection of composers hailing from the Low Countries of Northern France, Belgium and the Netherlands. One of the greatest accomplishments of the composers of the High Renaissance was the development of the principles of imitation. Each phrase of text is given its own *point of imitation*, repeated in turn by each voice part before moving on to the next phrase in a continuously overlapping series. With this technique of imitation in place, the composers we feature used every opportunity to set text in far more rich and elaborate fashion than that of their medieval predecessors. Philippe Verdelot’s “Gabriel Archangelus” takes the rare opportunity to set to music the story of the Archangel Gabriel’s visit to Zechariah to announce the conception
of John the Baptist - the standard bearer of the Christ. Carrying on with Gabriel’s visits we sing the well known plainsong antiphon “Ave maris stella,” juxtaposed with the French carol “Noel nouvelet,” followed by the beloved Basque carol “The Angel Gabriel from Heaven came” (Gabriel’s Message).

English medieval carols from the Trinity Roll, Ritson and Selden Manuscripts (“There is no Rose,” “Lullay: I saw a swete semly syght,” “Nowell: Out of your sleep”) exemplify the highly developed style of burden–verse–burden narrative form of the late Middle Ages—a form not unlike the modern pop song. The Christmas season gave those in religious orders the opportunity to marry the secular and the sacred in their music making and these medieval texts are again re-examined in new settings this year by British-born composers John Scott and Andrew Smith.

The scene at the manger in this Christmas calendar of a program celebrates the beasts adoring the Christ child. The Feast of the Holy Innocents is very much a part of the Christmas season even with its terrible story of the slaughter of the first-born of Bethlehem. The lament is set quite personally by Richard Pygott, a court composer to Henry VIII paraphrasing the Virgin mother cooing her child. The Coventry Carol (“Lully, lulla”) is a modern name for a very old carol meant to accompany an even older medieval mystery play—a Medieval form of liturgical drama in this case presented by the local Shearman and Tailors.

This program closes with an intimate arrangement by New York Polyphony bass Craig Phillips under his nom-de-plume, Alexander Craig. “The darkest midnight in December” takes its origin from an old Irish folk melody and has been a staple of the group’s repertoire since its inception.

- Geoffrey Williams © 2013

ANDREW SMITH BIOGRAPHY

Andrew Smith (born 1970 in Liverpool, England) has lived in Norway since 1984. After completing studies in Music and English at University of Oslo he worked for Ultima Oslo Contemporary Music Festival, and as organist and choirmaster at the English church in Oslo. In addition to composing, Andrew currently works for Norsk Korsenter, Norway’s only shop dealing exclusively in choral music.

Andrew had been composing for a long time, but it was not until after the Norwegian vocal group Trio Mediaeval performed and recorded his “Ave Maria” and “Regina Caeli” in 2000 that his career began in earnest. Through Trio Mediaeval Andrew came into contact with the male vocal quartet New York Polyphony who commissioned, with their musical adviser Malcolm Bruno, two works for their début CD I sing the birth (AV 2141). The critical acclaim with which this release was met encouraged the group to commission four more pieces for their follow-up disc Tudor City released in 2010, which reached number six on the Classical Billboard Charts in the US. A new piece, “Cunctipotens Genitor Deus,” will be recorded on the group’s fourth CD in 2013.

Other commissions outside Norway include the cycle of pieces “Mater Dei” for the Girl Choristers of Washington National Cathedral, “Venite Laudemus Dominum” for the Vocalis Chamber Choir (Buffalo, NY), “Laetabundus” for the Scottish group
Cappella Nova, Lamentation I-III for Sete Lágrimas (Portugal), and “Lux illuxit laetabunda” for the English choral magazine Choir and Organ.

In Norway, Andrew’s music has been commissioned and performed by many of the leading choirs, including Schola Cantorum, Kammerkoret NOVA, Grex Vocalis, Nidaros Cathedral Choir, The Norwegian Girls’ Choir and Nidaros Cathedral’s Girls’ Choir. Autumn 2012 saw the first performance of “Requiem” for equal voices, organ and improvised trumpet commissioned by Nidaros Cathedral Girls Choir. Andrew is a member of Consortium Vocale Oslo, a group specializing in Gregorian chant – a central source of inspiration in Andrew’s music.

Andrew’s works have been published by Norsk Musikforlag, Musikk-Husets Forlag and Oxford University Press.

**TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS**

**Veni Redemptor Gentium**

1. *Veni Redemptor Gentium*
   ostende partum virginis
   miretur omne saeculum
   talis decet partus Deum

Redeemer of the nations, come;
 Virgin’s Son, here make Thy home!
 Marvel now, O heaven and earth,
 that the Lord chose such a birth.

2. Wondrous birth O Wondrous Child of the Virgin undefiled
   Though by all the world disowned still to be in heaven enthroned

3. From the Father forth he came and returneth to the same
   Captive leading death and hell high the song of triumph swell!

4. Brightly doth thy manger shine, glorious is its light divine
   Let not sin o’ercloud this night, ever be our faith thus bright.

5. *Sit, Christe, rex piissime,*
   *tibi Patrique gloria*
   *cum Spiritu Paraclito,*
   *in sempiterna saecula. Amen.*

May Christ the loving King
 together with the Father
 and the Holy Spirit
 be glorified ever and eternally. Amen.

**Audivi vocem de caelo**

*Audivi vocem de caelo venientem:*
*Oleum recondite in vasis vestris,*
*dum sponsus advenerit.*
*Media nocte clamor factus est.*
*Ecce sponsus venit.*
I heard a voice from heaven saying:
Lay up the oil in your vessels
when the bridegroom cometh.
At midnight there was a cry made:
Behold the bridegroom cometh.

Adam lay ybounden

Adam lay ybounden,
Bounden in a bond:
Four thousand winter
Thought he not too long.

And all was for an apple,
An apple that he took,
As clerkês vinden
Written in their book.

Nè had the apple taken been,
The apple taken been,
Ne had never our lady
Abeen heavenè queen.

Blessèd be the time
That apple taken was,
Therefore we moun singen,
Deo gracias!

Veni Emmanuel

Veni, O Sapientia, quae hic disponis omnia,
veni, viam prudentiae ut doceas et gloriae.
R: Gaudé! Gaudé! Emmanuel,
nascetur pro te Israel!

O come, Thou Wisdom, from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.
R. Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel,
to thee shall come Emmanuel!

Veni, Clavis Davidica, regna reclude caelica,
fac iter tutum superum, et claude vias inferum. (Refrain)

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav’nly home,
make safe the way that leads on high,
that we no more have cause to sigh. (Refrain)

Veni, veni O Oriens, solare nos adveniens,
noctis depelle nebulas, dirasque mortis tenebras. (Refrain)

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,
and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
perse the gloomy clouds of night
and death’s dark shadow put to flight. (Refrain)
Veni, veni Emmanuel captivum solve Israel, 
qui gemit in exilio, privatus Dei Filio. (Refrain)

O come, O come, Emmanuel, 
and ransom captive Israel, 
that morns in lonely exile here 
until the Son of God appear. (Refrain)

**Gabriel Archangelus**

*Gabriel archangelus apparuit Zaccharie dicens:*
*Nascetur tibi filius, nomen eius Ioannes vocabitur, 
et in nativitate eius multi gaudebunt. 
Erit enim magnus coram Domino. 
Vinum et siceram non bibet, 
et in nativitate eius multi gaudebunt.*

The Archangel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, saying:
“There will be born to you a son; his name will be called John, 
and at his birth many will rejoice, 
for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. 
Wine and strong drink he will not use, 
and at his birth many will rejoice.”

**Ave maris stella**

*(Hail, star of the sea, loving Mother of God, and also always a virgin, Happy gate of heaven.)*

Taking that sweet Ave which from Gabriel came. 
Peace confirm within us changing Eve’s name. 
Break the sinner’s fetters, make our blindness day. 
Chase all evils from us for all blessings pray

(Show yourself to be a mother, May he accept prayers through you, he who, born for us, Chose to be yours.)

Virgin all-excelling, mildest of the mild. 
Free from guilt preserve us meek and undefiled 
Keep our life all-spotless make our way secure, 
‘Til we find in Jesus life for evermore.

(Let there be praise to God the Father, Glory to Christ in the highest, To the Holy Spirit, One honor to all three. Amen.)

**Gabriel’s Message**

The angel Gabriel from Heaven came, 
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame, 
“All hail”, said he, “thou lowly maiden Mary, 
most highly favoured lady,” Gloria, Gloria!

“For know, a blessed mother thou shalt be, 
all generations laud and honour thee, 
thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold. 
Most highly favoured lady,” Gloria, Gloria!
Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
“To me be as it pleaseth God,” she said,
“my soul shall laud and magnify His holy Name,”
Most highly favoured lady, Gloria, Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the child, was born.
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
Most highly favoured lady. Gloria!

There is no Rose

There is no rose of swych virtu
As is the rose that bar Jhesu.
Alleluia.

For in this rose conteynyed was
Heven and erthe in lytle space.
Res miranda.

Be that rose we may weel see
That he is God in personys thre.
Pari forma.

Leave we all this worldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth.
Transeamus.

The aungelys sungyn the sheperdes to:
“Gloria in excelsis Deo.”
Gaudeamus.

Lully, lullow: I saw a swete semly syght

Lullay lullow, lully lully,
Bewy bewy,
Lullay lullow, lully lully,
Baw baw my barne, slepe softly now.

I saw a swete semly syght,
A blisful birde, a blossum bright
That murnynge made and mirth of mange.

Lullay lullow...

A maydin moder, mek and myld,
In cradil kepe a knave child
That softly slepe. Scho sate and sange:
Lullay lullow...

Nowell: Out of your sleep

Out of your sleep arise and wake,
for God mankind hath now take.
All of a maid without any make;
of all women she beareth the bell.
And through a maiden fair and wise, now man is made of full great price; now angels kneel to man’s service, and at this time all this befell.

Now man is brighter than the sun; now man in heaven on high shall won; blessed be God this game is begun and his mother that beareth the bell.

Now blessed Brother grant us grace, at doomes day to see thy face, and in thy court to have a place, that we may there sing thee nowell.

**Nowell: Arise and Wake**

Out of your sleep arise and wake, for God mankind now hath y-take all of a maid without any make; of all women she beareth the bell. Nowell, Nowell, Nowell.

And through a maiden fair and wise now man is made of full great price; now angels kneel to man’s service, and at this time all this befell. Nowell, Nowell, Nowell.

Now man is brighter than the sun; now man in heav’n on high shall won; blessed be God, this game is begun and His mother, Empress of Hell. Nowell, Nowell, Nowell.

Now blessed Brother grant us grace at doomes day to see Thy face, and in Thy court to have a place, that we may there sing Nowell, that we may there sing Nowell. Nowell, Nowell, Nowell.

**O magnum mysterium**

*O magnum mysterium et admirabile sacramentum,*
*ut animalia viderent Dominum natum jacentem in praesepio.*
*Ó beata Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt portare Dominum Jesum Christum.*
*Alleluia!*

O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord lying in a manger! Ó blessed is the Virgin, whose womb was worthy to bear Christ the Lord. Alleluia!
Quid petis, o fili (Henry VIII’s Songbook)

Quid petis, o fili? Mater dulcissima ba ba.
O pater, o fili mihi plausus oscula da da.

What seekest Thou, O my Son the sweetest mother ba ba.
O Father, O Son Clapping hands da da.

The mother, full mannerly and meekly as a maid,
looking on her little son, so laughing in lap laid
so prettily, so pertly, so passingly well apay’d
full softly and full soberly unto her sweet son she said:

Quid petis...

Musing on her manners So nigh marr’d was my main
Save it pleased me so passingly That past was my pain;
Yet softly to her sweet son Me thought I heard her sain:
Now gracious God and good sweet babe Yet once this game again

Quid petis...

I mean this by Mary, the maker’s mother of might
Thus saying to her saviour this saw I in my sight
This reason that I rede you now, I rede it full rights

The Coventry Carol: Pageant of the Shearmen and the Tailors

Lully, lulla thou little tiny child. Bye bye lully lullay

O sisters too, how may we do for to preserve this day?
This poor youngling for whom we do sing. Bye bye lully lullay

Herod the king, in his raging charged he hath this day
His men of might in his own sight, all young children to slay.

That woe is me, poor child, for me and ever more and aye
For thy parting neither say no sing. Bye bye lully lullay

The darkest midnight in December

The darkest midnight in December, no snow nor hail nor winter’s storm
Shall hinder us for to remember the babe that on this night was born.

Four thousand years from the creation the world lay groaning under sin.
No one could ever expect salvation, no one could ever enter heaven.

Adam’s fall had damned us all to hell to endless pains forlorn
‘Twas so decreed we’d ne’er been freed had not this heavenly babe been born.

‘Twas but pure love that from above brought him to save us from all harms
Then let us sing and welcome him, the God of Love in Mary’s arms.
NEW YORK POLYPHONY BIOGRAPHY

New York Polyphony are fast-rising stars on the classical music scene. Praised for a “rich, natural sound that’s larger and more complex than the sum of its parts” (National Public Radio), “Early music’s Fab Four” (Brattleboro Reformer) are recognized as one of the finest vocal ensembles active today. The all-male quartet apply not only refined musicianship and interpretative detail, but also a refreshingly modern touch to repertoire that ranges from austere medieval melodies to cutting-edge contemporary works. Dedication to innovative programming, as well as a focus on rare and rediscovered early music, have earned New York Polyphony critical accolades and a devoted following.

In early 2012, New York Polyphony released endBeginning, their third album and first on acclaimed label BIS Records. Containing rare and never-before recorded works from the Franco-Flemish Renaissance, it has amassed substantial critical acclaim. endBeginning has been featured on NPR’s Deceptive Cadence, selected as ‘CD of the Week’ by Alex Ross (The Rest Is Noise), and rated 10-out-of-10 by Classics Today. It also received high marks from international publications including Klassik Heute (Germany), Diapason (France) and Gramophone (UK).

Hailed as a “stunning tour through chant, polyphony and renaissance harmonies” (Minnesota Public Radio), their second album Tudor City spent three weeks in the Top 10 of Billboard’s classical album chart. It has been featured on Danish Public Radio, American Public Radio and NPR’s All Things Considered.

NYP’s debut album I sing the birth was released in 2007. The disc—an intimate meditation on the Christmas season—garnered unanimous praise. Gramophone named it “one of the season’s best,” BBC Music Magazine selected it as Editor’s Christmas Choice 2007 and Classic FM Magazine deemed it “a disc for all seasons.”

Since their founding in 2006, New York Polyphony have maintained an active performance schedule. They have participated in major concert series and festivals throughout North America and Europe, including Miller Theatre at Columbia University; Dallas Chamber Music Series; Ireland’s Ardee Baroque Festival; Denmark’s Vendsyssel Festival; Festival de Música de Morelia, Mexico; and Choral at Cadogan Hall in London. They have been featured on Footprints to Paradise: A Medieval Christmas for Public Radio International, Performance Today for American Public Media, and In Practice for National Public Radio. In December 2011, New York Polyphony made their national television debut on The Martha Stewart Show.

Recent engagements include a residency at Dartmouth College, a broadcast holiday event for Minnesota Public Radio and the premiere of the Missa Charles Darwin—a newly commissioned secular Mass setting based on texts of Charles Darwin by composer Gregory Brown—at a TEDx event in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Highlights of past seasons include a return to Miller Theatre, a holiday performance for the Kansas City Friends of Chamber Music and a residency at Stanford University. In addition to appearing in recital on the inaugural season of Stanford’s new Bing Hall, NYP was the featured ensemble in the world premieres of Theotokia and The War Reporter. Composed by Stanford music professor Jonathan Berger with librettist Dan O’Brien, these two new chamber operas will be directed by Grammy winner Rinde Eckert and accompanied by members of the St. Lawrence String Quartet.
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