

Peninsula Cantare

39th Season

Janice Gunderson, Music Director



Starry Night

Alexander Bootzin, Piano

Palo Alto First Baptist Church
Saturday, December 12, 2009, 7:30 pm

Cañada College Theatre
Sunday, December 13, 2009, 3 pm



Program

Aftonen (Evening) Hugo Alfvén (1872-1960)

Songs of the night Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

- I. O Schöne Nacht (Oh Lovely Night)
- II. Abendlied (Evening Song)

Songs of light

- I. Beams of Gentle Light Robert Holmes (1911-1999)
- II. O Nata Lux Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

Keep your lamps! Andre Thomas (b. 1952)
Soloist: Debby Hamburger

Remember Brian Holmes (b. 1946)
Words: Susan Cooper (b. 1935)

A Christmas Carol Norman Dello Joio (1913-2008)
Words: G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936)
Soloists: Pam Eaken and Sharon Rice

O Brillante Estrella (O beautiful star) Mark Sirett (b. 1952)
(Puerto Rican Christmas nativity text)

Intermission

There Shall a Star from Jacob Come Forth Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Videntes Stellam (Beholding the star) Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Behold the Star William L. Dawson (1899-1990)
Soloists: Vicki Hanson and Ruthie Wilkins

Star Carol John Rutter (b. 1945)

Three Nocturnes Dan Forrest (b. 1978)

- I. Stars Words: Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)
- II. Lightly Stepped a Yellow Star
Words: Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)
- III. Thou Motive of the Stars
Words: Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

Program Notes

A Heaven full of stars. The night sky has been a source of endless inspiration for composers through the centuries. The shades of evening – light and dark – the memories and emotions associated with the night, the significance of a star – have all been creatively depicted through rhythm, melody and harmonic colors.

We begin with the setting sun, and the echoes of the valley in the still night. The Swedish composer Hugo Alfvén was notable for music full of colorful, picturesque harmonic shading. From Brahms' Four Songs Op.92, *O Schöne Nacht* evokes the lovely night in splendor glowing. Listen for the twinkling stars in the piano accompaniment. In *Abendlied* we sink into a tranquil sleep.

The significance of light shines through the next selections. Light gently beams from a Hanukah candle. Representing the 16th century, Thomas Tallis sets the Latin text *O Light born of light*. The foolish virgins are admonished to keep their lamps filled with oil in the spiritual setting by Andre Thomas.

Remember is a hauntingly beautiful new composition by San Jose composer Brian Holmes, where a star is significant. Premiered last weekend by the *San Francisco Choral Artists*, *Cantare* is thrilled to share *Remember* with our audience.

A choir favorite from last season was *A Christmas Carol* by American Norman Dello Joio. He so skillfully set the poetry of G. K. Chesterton, with the references to light and stars, that we had to include it again this year.

O Brillante Estrella is an original composition on a traditional Puerto Rican Christmas nativity text. The style of the work is that of a villancico, a lively Spanish carol; the colorful harmonies, syncopated rhythms, and flamboyant accompaniment help to capture the Spanish and Latin-American spirit.

Mendelssohn never finished his last oratorio, "Christus", near the end of his life. The one chorus *There Shall a Star* does remain. Francis Poulenc's music is characterized by a distinct harmonic language and subtle rhythm, all evidenced in this short motet. Then William Dawson's exciting version of *Behold the Star* with the men and women echoing each other in its driving conclusion. It would not be the holiday season without one of John Rutter's utterly charming carols.

—Janice Gunderson

Texts

Aftonen (Evening)—Hugo Alfvén (1872-1960)

Still, still, the woods, radiant, the heavens,
Dim, distant horns fill the air with their echo.

Sunset aglow, soon disappears beneath the sea.
Slowly, so slowly, it disappears beneath the sea.

Through the mountains, through the valleys,
Lingering, the echoes, the echoes sound.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

I. O Schöne Nacht (Oh Lovely Night)

O schöne Nacht!

Oh lovely night!

Am Himmel märchenhaft
erglänzt der Mond in seiner
ganzen Pracht;

In heaven above the moon shines
bright, in splendor glowing
through the night.

Um ihn der kleinen Sterne
liebliche Genossenschaft.

The stars in happy laughter
shimmer sweetly by her side,

O schöne Nacht!

Oh lovely night!

Es schimmert hell
der Tau am grünen Halm;
Mit Macht im Fliederbusche
schlägt die Nachtigall.

The dewy grass aglow,
a dazzling sight!
With might in lilac bushes chirps
the nightingale, that all is right;

Der Knabe schleicht zu
seiner Liebsten sacht.

The lover comes upon
his love so soft

O schöne Nacht!

Oh lovely night!

II. Abendlied (Evening Song)

Friedlich bekämpfen
Nacht sich und Tag;
Wie das zu dämpfen,
wie das zu lösen vermag.
Der mich bedrückte,
schläfst du schon, Schmerz?
Was mich beglückte, sage,
was wars doch, mein Herz?
Freude wie Kummer,
fühl ich zerrann,
Aber den Schlummer
führten sie leise heran.
Und im Entschweben,
immer empor,
Kommt mir das Leben ganz
wie ein Schlummerlied vor.

Peacefully night and day
quarrel with each other;
How can that be muffled,
how can that be resolved!
That which weighed on my mind,
do you already sleep, pain?
That which made me happy,
tell me, what was it, my heart?
Joy as well as pain,
I feel, melted away,
But they led slumber
quietly on.
And in floating away,
always upwards,
Life seems to me to be
just like a lullaby.

Beams of Gentle Light—Robert Holmes (1911-1999)

Beams of gentle light,
Beams of gentle light,
Little taper burning bright
Make us thankful,
Make us joyful,
On this festive Hanukah night.

Let us sing a song of gladness,
Hearts full of love we bring,
Allelujah, Allelujah, Allelujah,
Now we sing!

O Nata Lux—Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

O nata lux de lumine,
Jesu redemptor saeculi,
Dignare clemens
supplicum
Laudes precesque sumere.

O Light born of Light,
Jesus, redeemer of the world,
With loving-kindness deign
to receive
Suppliant praise and prayer.

Qui carne quondam
contegi
Dignatus es pro perditis.
Nos membra confer effici,
Tui beati corporis.

Thou who once deigned to be
clothed in flesh
For the sake of the lost,
Grant us to be members
Of thy blessed body.

Keep your lamps!—Andre Thomas (b. 1952)

Keep your lamps trimmed and burning,
The time is drawing nigh.

Children, don't get weary,
'Til your work is done.

Christian journey soon be over,
The time is drawing nigh.

Remember—Brian Holmes (b. 1946)

Words by Susan Cooper (b. 1935)

There was snow—do you remember?

It was many years ago

and we were young,

And a star moved through the sky...

The air was cold,

And over the hill came voices,

faint and high;

And we sang too,

there by the fire--

I can hear the laughter still—

All together, giving, glad

And never forgetting why.

That was a time, when we were young

And the world's bright star came by...

Tell me, tell me do you remember?

It was many years ago

But you still may hear

the singing if you try.

A Christmas Carol—Norman Dello Joio (1913-2008)

Words: G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's
lap, His hair was like a light.

(O weary, weary were the world,

But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's
breast, His hair was like a star.

(O stern and cunning are the kings,

But here the true hearts are.)

<p>The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart, O, His hair was like a fire. (Weary, weary is the world, But here the world's desire.)</p>	<p>The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee, His hair was like a crown. And all the flowers looked up at Him, And all the stars looked down.</p>
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O Brillante Estrella (O beautiful star)—Mark Sirett (b. 1952)
(Puerto Rican Christmas nativity text)

<p>De tierra lejana Venimos a verte, Nos sirve de guía La Estrella de Oriente.</p>	<p>From a distant home we seek the Savior, We use to guide us the Eastern Star.</p>
<p>O brillante estrella que anuncias la aurora No nos falte nunca tu luz bienhechora.</p>	<p>O beautiful star that tells us of the dawn Never cease to shine Heaven's wondrous light!</p>
<p>Gloria en las alturas, al Hijo de Dios, Gloria en las alturas, y en la tierra amor.</p>	<p>Glory in the highest to the Son of God Glory in the highest and peace on earth.</p>
<p>Al recién nacido que es Rey de los reyes, Oro le regalo para ornar sus sienes.</p>	<p>To the new-born Babe, glowing gold I bring. A token of His power to reign in glory above.</p>
<p>Como es Dios el Niño le regalo incienso, Perfume con alma que sube hasta el cielo.</p>	<p>To God's own child a token of perfume I bring frankincense that rises to heaven.</p>
<p>Al Niño del cielo que bajó a la tierra, Le regalo mirra que inspira tristeza.</p>	<p>To the child of heaven bitter myrrh I have, As a refection of the pain he will bear.</p>

Intermission

**There Shall a Star from Jacob Come Forth—
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)**

There shall a Star from Jacob come forth,
And a scepter from Israel rise up.
And dash in pieces princes and nations.

How brightly shines the Morning Star
With sudden radiance from afar,
With light and comfort glowing!
Thy Word, Jesus,
 Inly feeds us,
 Truly leads us,
 Life bestowing.
Praise, oh praise, such love o'er flowing.

**Videntes Stellam (Beholding the star)—
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)**

Videntes stellam,	Beholding the star,
Magi gavisi sunt	With joy the Wise Men came and
gaudio magno:	with great gladness,
Et intrantes domum	And they entered in the house and
obtulerunt Domino	there offered to the Lord
aurum, thus et myrrham.	gold and myrrh and incense.
Videntes stellam.	Beholding the star.

Behold the Star—William L. Dawson (1899-1990)

Behold the star!
Behold the star up yonder!
Behold the star of Bethlehem.

There was no room found in the Inn,
 It is the star of Bethlehem.
For Him who was born free from sin,
 It is the star of Bethlehem.
The wise men came from the East,
 It is the star of Bethlehem..

To worship Him, the “Prince of Peace,”

It is the star of Bethlehem.

A song broke forth upon the night,

It is the star of Bethlehem.

It is the star of Bethlehem,

Peace, peace on earth,

goodwill to men,

It is the star of Bethlehem.

Behold the star!

Behold the star up yonder!

Allelujah, behold the star!

Behold the star of Bethlehem.

Star Carol—John Rutter (b. 1945)

Sing this night, for a boy is born in Bethlehem,

Christ our Lord in a lowly manger lies;

Bring your gifts, come and worship at his cradle,

Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!

See his star shining bright

In the sky this Christmas Night!

Follow me joyfully;

Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!

Angels bright, come from heaven's highest glory,

Bear the news with its message of good cheer:

“Sing, rejoice, for a King is come to save us,

Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!”

See, he lies in his mother's tender keeping;

Jesus Christ in her loving arms asleep,

Shepherds poor, come to worship and adore him,

Offer their humble gifts before the son of Mary.

Let us all pay our homage at the manger,

Sing his praise on this joyful Christmas Night;

Christ is come, bringing promise of salvation;

Hurry to Bethlehem and see the son of Mary!

Three Nocturnes—Dan Forrest (b. 1978)

Composer's Note: A commission for a piece for chorus and percussion ensemble came at a perfect time for me, when I had been marveling at the night skies on the plains of Kansas. I chose three texts about stars which were penned by different authors in diverse styles, but which all expressed a sense of wonder at the night sky.

The first movement, "*Stars*", opens up sonic space as a way to paint the expanse of the heavens. A mysterious and almost exotic introduction gives way to a burst of color and dynamic, as the stars appear over the treetops. A contrasting middle section of the poem provides opportunity for a fiery B section, before a return to the opening moods leaves us alone in that same "sonic space".

The second movement, "*Lightly stepped a yellow star*", paints its wonderful text with staccato singing and an additive contrapuntal texture. Again, a middle section provides contrast; but this time, the contrast is velvety and ethereal, with hints of the energetic first section popping up between phrases. The one-word punchline of the poem, "punctual", is then revealed. Several hints of this temporal element are present in the piece- from the "cogs and gears" clockwork texture to a subtle hint of Big Ben!

The third movement, "*...Thou motive of the stars*", is the most majestic and declamatory of the set, building to the overwhelming chorale-style setting of the title line. Near the end, the mysterious silence of the opening bars of the whole set returns, and the entire set ends with the "stars" theme and the sense of space from the first

I. Stars—Words: Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)

Alone in the night	Up the dome of heaven
On a dark hill	Like a great hill,
With pines around me	I watch them marching
Spicy and still,	Stately and still,
And a heaven full of stars	And I know that I
Over my head,	Am honored to be
White and topaz	Witness
And misty red;	Of so much majesty.
Myriads with beating	
Hearts of fire	
That aeons	
Cannot vex or tire;	

II. Lightly Stepped a Yellow Star—

Words: Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Lightly stepped a yellow star
To its lofty place,
Loosed the Moon her silver hat
From her lustral face.
All of evening softly lit
As an Astral Hall -
“Father,” I observed to Heaven,
“You are punctual.”

III. Thou Motive of the Stars—

Words: Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

O, vast Rondure, swimming in space!
Covered all over with visible power and beauty!
Alternate light and day, and the teeming, spiritual darkness;
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon
and countless stars above;

O thou transcendent! Light of the light!
Shedding forth universes, thou centre of them!
Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving!
Thou moral spiritual fountain!
Affection's source! Thou reservoir! Thou pulse!

Thou motive of the stars, suns, systems, that circling,
move, in order, safe, harmonious,
Across the shapeless vastnesses of space.



Peninsula Cantare

Janice Gunderson, Music Director

Alexander Bootzin, Accompanist

Soprano

Susan Breuer
Pamela Eaken
Shirley Fitzgerald
Roxanne Fornells
Debby Hamburger
Vicki Hanson
Linda Litz
Sharon Rice
Laurel Shimer

Alto

Jean Cole
Ellen Hill
Vicki Jayswal
Kay Johnson
Marilyn Michaelson
Paula Ondricek
Robyn Peters
Diane Reeve
Pamela Schwarz
Patricia Steuer
Carol Vollen

Tenor

Larry Baer
Max Capestany
Jamie Gaskin
Emery Gordon
Joseph Kresse
Paul Reeve
Ruthie Wilkins

Bass

John Friesen
Ron Clazie
Peter Gunderson
Ron Hodges
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Acknowledgements

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Emery Gordon, Mailings
Gene Hogenauer, Programs
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Our 2010 Concerts

March 14: *On a Lighter Note.* Music of Gershwin, Shearing, and The Beatles with the *Nucleus* Jazz Quartet,
3:00PM Cañada College Main Theatre

May 22 and 23: *Fanfare.* Joint concert with Masterworks Chorale. Rutter's *Gloria*, music of Gabrieli for double choir and others

Check out our website at www.peninsulacantare.org