

Music Notes for October 26th

Prelude: J.S. Bach: *Kleine Praeludium* in D Major BWV 936

Introit: Thomas Dawkins: *Psalm XCII*

Anthem: (after Gloria Patri) Albert Hay Malotte: *The Lord's Prayer*

Anthem: (after Sermon) Peter I. Tchaikovsky: *God of All Nature* (arr. H. Loomis)

Offertory: J.S. Bach: *Kleine Praeludium* in C Major BWV 933

Postlude: J.S. Bach: *Tocatta and Fugue* in d minor BWV 565

This Sunday's music is intended as a birthday gift to one of the matriarchs of our congregation, Phyllis Newman. While it is generally considered impolite to tell a lady's age, at a certain number of years it becomes an achievement rather than an insult, and as such I have written the introit with the Latin text of the opening verse to the Psalm that corresponds to this birthday. Today marks the first performance of the work, a short choral motet influenced by the styles of Poulenc and Duruflé. The English translation of Psalm 92:1 is:

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, And to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.

Phyllis has told me before that in her ideal service, the Lord's Prayer would be sung by Sharon Schmidt, and as another way of wishing her well, she will sing Malotte's famous setting. Malotte was actually not a classical composer for the most part, but wrote scores for over a dozen Disney films and many other productions. After the Lord's Prayer setting, his most famous work is probably the Scout Oath!

This past spring, Phyllis spoke with me as she often does after church and asked me if I could try and find a piece that she remembered very clearly from her time at the Northfield School (now merged with the boy's school as Northfield Mount Hermon). She remembered a setting of the *Andante cantabile* from Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony with the text "God of all nature" being sung at their year-end concerts and being very popular there as well as personally moving to her. She also issued a bit of a challenge that she had asked every choir director at this church since she joined it in 1953 to find it and none of them had! So, I suspected that I was in for a challenge, and went home to do some research. Thanks to a lot of catalogs being online, I was able to find that the arrangement existed in a book called *Senior Laurel Songs* that was published in Boston in 1926 as a book of choruses and hymns appropriate for high school singing. Since the book was very popular and there were undoubtedly thousands of copies printed for schools across the country, finding a copy was a matter of going to a couple of used book websites, and soon I had a copy in hand.

Harvey W. Loomis, an American composer, arranged this piece from Tchaikovsky, paraphrasing it and cutting the harmony down to four voices for choir. It is quite a good arrangement and the choir sings it very well. It is my pleasure to bring this piece to the congregation.

This is also the Sunday closest to All Hallows, and while J.S. Bach did not intend any of his freely virtuosic organ music to coincide with the church calendar, the great Tocatta and Fugue in d minor has become associated with Halloween. It is certainly a work with a menacing beginning, magnificent architecture and proportion, and both a pleasure and challenge to play. It is longer than a usual postlude, but I hope you will find it worthy of an extra few minutes. At the other end of the spectrum are his *Kleine Praeludien*, simple but elegant in style, and probably written for his children for their studies at the keyboard.

Thomas Dawkins, organist/choir director