

Prelude: W.A. Mozart: *Adagio in C* for Glass Harmonica K. 356

Anthem: Benjamin Britten: *New Year's Carol*

Offertory: Benjamin Britten: *Interlude* from *A Ceremony of Carols*

Postlude: Antonio Soler: *Emperor's Fanfare*

The words for the *New Year's Carol* were first published in modern English in 1931 and are from a collection of poems called *Tom Tiddler's Ground*. The refrain's text "levy dew" is probably a corruption of the French *levez à dieu* meaning "raise up to God," which would support the popular view that the text was written for the elevation of the host at communion, due to the next line "the water and the wine." Britten wrote this setting in 1936 as part of a the song cycle *Friday Afternoons* dedicated to his brother, a teacher who taught singing to his pupils on Friday afternoons.

The *Ceremony of Carols* is one of Britten's most popular works. The interlude, originally for solo harp, is based on the Sarum chant *Hodie Christus natus est* (Today Christ is born) and evokes an atmosphere of stillness and of quiet wonder.

Both the prelude and postlude pay tribute to the great organist E. Power Biggs. Born in England, he became the organist at Christ Church and lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts from 1932 until his death in 1977. He gained tremendous popularity for his weekly radio broadcasts of organ recitals from 1942 to 1958. According to the New Grove Dictionary, "his ultimate achievement was to outplay anyone else in the United States where bulk, variety, selfless devotion to the instrument and a proper understanding of it are concerned." Indeed his arrangements are extremely well-suited to the organ and always in good taste if occasionally bombastic, but with the greatest organs in the world at his disposal, this can be easily forgiven!

Mozart wrote his *Adagio in C* for the newly developed glass harmonica, a set of rotating glass bowls played with moistened fingertips and perfected by Benjamin Franklin. Biggs fills out the harmony for keyboard and suggests performance either with light flute stops on the organ, or on a celesta.

The Spanish baroque composer Antonio Soler held many important positions in his country including at the royal chapel, and was a prolific composer for organ and harpsichord, writing 120 sonatas para instrumentos de tecla (for keyboard instruments), as well as six concertos for two organs. Biggs takes a movement from the sixth of these and entitles it *The Emperor's Fanfare* giving it an impressive adaptation suggesting full organ on both keyboards.

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