

Music Notes for February 24th

Prelude: Henry Purcell: *Chaconne* from *Lessons for Harpsichord or Organ*

Introit: Sir Arthur Sullivan: *Ever Faithful*

Anthem: Sir Arthur Sullivan: *The Way is Long and Dreary*

Offertory: Sir Arthur Sullivan: *The Lost Chord*

Choral Response: Sir Arthur Sullivan: *Sweet Saviour, Bless us ere we go*

Postlude: Sir Edward Elgar: *Salut d'amour*

Sir Arthur Sullivan is most remembered today for his fourteen collaborations with W.S. Gilbert. In his own lifetime he was considered England's most prominent composer, and was prolific in most areas of music, though his sacred works far outnumber the secular, his first sacred song being published at the age of thirteen.

His large output of hymn tunes is somewhat better known in England, including an alternate version of *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*, though a few of his hymns are familiar to American churchgoers, the most famous being *Onward, Christian Soldiers*. The introit and response are two other Sullivan hymns, the first with a text of John Milton, a verse paraphrase of Psalm 136 with the refrain "For his mercies aye endure, Ever faithful, ever sure." The response is a text by the Victorian poet Frederick William Faber.

Two other genres are represented in the anthem and offertory. The anthem *The Way is Long and Dreary* is from a collection of five sacred part-songs* published in 1871, combining a text of Adelaide Procter with the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) from the Mass. Despite the title, it is a fairly uplifting and hopeful-sounding work. The offertory is also from one of Adelaide Procter's texts and is a song originally composed as a tribute to the composer's late brother which later gained popularity as a drawing-room ballad. This song, *The Lost Chord*, is probably Sullivan's most famous work without Gilbert and was even sung and recorded by Enrico Caruso, who sang it at the Metropolitan Opera during a memorial concert for victims of the *Titanic*.

The accompaniment for *The Lost Chord* is unusual. The primary accompaniment is given on the piano but an extra part for harmonium was written as well. The harmonium was very popular in Victorian England and performing the work as written would not have been difficult, but today it is much easier to use softer stops on the organ to achieve this effect.

Sullivan wrote very little music for the keyboard, and so the prelude and postlude are by two other significant English composers. The prelude is a *Chaconne* by Henry Purcell published in 1696, and the postlude is a piece by Sir Edward Elgar, a near-contemporary of Sullivan. It is the famous *Salut d'amour* or "Love's greeting" originally for violin and piano but adapted for the keyboard by the composer.

*A part-song is a type of choral composition where the melody is sung in the highest voice part as opposed to a madrigal where it frequently moves between parts.

Thomas Dawkins, interim organist/choir director