

Music Notes for March 30th

Prelude: P. Kellach Waddle: Two Toccatas: *I. Watchful...*

Introit: *Ain'a That Good News!* (arr. William Dawson)

Anthem: Randall Thompson: *Alleluia*

Offertory: Ludwig van Beethoven: Variation on *God Save the Queen*

Response: Thomas A. Dorsey: *God Be With You*

Postlude: P. Kellach Waddle: Two Toccatas: *II. The Candle Burns Loudly*

The service for the first Sunday after Easter continues with the joyful themes begun the week before, and this week we turn our focus to American music from the 20th century. The introit, the spiritual *Ain'a That Good News!* is of an unknown date, passed down through oral tradition. This arrangement is by William Dawson from the Tuskegee Institute, published in 1937 at a time when Dawson was conducting the Tuskegee Institute Choir in recordings that made southern spiritual singing available to a worldwide audience.

Our worship is bracketed by music by a living composer and a good friend of mine, P. Kellach Waddle. One of the most prolific composers of his generation, his work has been twice nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in music, and his music has been performed in 38 states and 14 countries worldwide. A professional solo bassist himself, one of his specialties is writing music for unusual instruments. The pair of Toccatas that I will play as prelude and postlude today were originally written for and performed on the carillon in the University of Texas at Austin bell tower. Since it is exceedingly difficult to find a bell tower (and someone to play it!) the composer has authorized me to adapt these pieces for the organ. In the composer's own words: "The first piece intends to portray a sense of both mystery and care; such a benevolent, unknown protector watching a city. The second depicts the power of faith, the singular but intensely burning candle of the title."

Randall Thompson was born in New York, attended Harvard University and proceeded to write a number of pieces with New England themes, the most famous being his choral cycle *Frostiana* to poems of the still-living Robert Frost, who suggested some of his more singer-friendly texts. The *Alleluia* dates from 1940 and was written at the request of Serge Koussevitsky for the opening of the Berkshire Music Center, which is now Tanglewood. It is the most performed of all his works, sung by church, high school, college, and professional choirs across the country.

Keeping in the American spirit but also remembering that much American music comes from England as well as many other places, the offertory music will be a variation by Beethoven on what Americans have come to know as a patriotic tune -- *My Country 'Tis of Thee*, -- but the English revere as their national anthem, *God Save the Queen*. (The melody for our own national anthem actually comes from an old English drinking song!) We will finish the service with Thomas A. Dorsey's classic closing hymn, *God Be With You*.

Thomas Dawkins, organist/choir director