



Masterworks Singers

THE GIFT OF LIFE

**Six Canticles of Creation
By John Rutter**

Sunday, April 21, 2024

7:30pm

St. Theresa Catholic Church

Austin, Texas

With the Masterworks Chamber Orchestra

PROGRAM

La Réjouissance

Georg Philipp Telemann

Brass Intro

The Gift of Life— Six Canticles of Creation

John Rutter

1. O all ye works of the Lord
2. The tree of life
3. Hymn to the Creator of Light

Intermission—Mark Stern

Little Preludes and Intermezzos: No. 1 Maestoso
Schmücke dich

Hermann Schroeder
Anton Wilhelm Leupold

4. O Lord, how manifold are thy works
 5. The gift of each day
 6. Believe in life
- Reprise: O all ye works of the Lord

NOTES FROM JOHN RUTTER

I wrote *The Gift of Life* early in 2015 as a result of a chance conversation at a choral convention in 2013 with an old friend, Terry Price. He was planning to retire from his position as Minister of Music at a church in Dallas, and his church wanted to give him an appropriate gift to mark his many years of service; I was already thinking I would like to write a fairly substantial new choral work with orchestra, and these two thoughts came together. Terry's church immediately agreed that this new work would be the right gift, and a theme soon suggested itself: in 1985 I had written a Requiem which, like any Requiem, inevitably reflects on death – why not write the opposite, a work celebrating life? Unlike a Requiem, where a set form of words is laid down in Catholic liturgy, no framework exists for a celebration of life, and I had to choose (and in three cases, write) texts which were appropriate to a theme rarely expressed in music since Haydn's wondrous oratorio *The Creation* in 1798.

The six movements of *The Gift of Life* reflect different facets of the miracles of creation and of life, and I was happy to be able to include as the third of them my Hymn to the Creator of Light, originally written in 1992 as an unaccompanied double-choir motet in memory of the composer Herbert Howells on the occasion of the dedication of his new memorial window in Gloucester Cathedral. I had always felt slightly wistful that this piece was somewhat of an orphan on its own, and here was an opportunity to give it a home as part of a larger work. I added a discreet orchestral accompaniment to enrich the texture and to make it more consistent with the other five movements. I gratefully acknowledge the generosity of David and Miranda Lind who provided funds for the commissioning of *The Gift of Life*. The score is inscribed 'in honour of Terry Price and in memory of Alice Marie Lind, commissioned by David and Miranda Lind'.

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

1. O ALL YE WORKS OF THE LORD

O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye angels of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye heavens, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye waters that be above the firmament, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O all ye powers of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye sun and moon, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye stars of heaven, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye showers and dew, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye winds of God, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye fire and heat, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye winter and summer, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye dews and frosts, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye frost and cold, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye ice and snow, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye nights and days, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye light and darkness, ye lightnings and clouds: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O let the earth bless the Lord: yea, let it praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye mountains and hills, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O all ye green things upon the earth, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye wells, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye seas and floods, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye whales, and all that move in the waters, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O all ye fowls of the air, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O all ye beasts and cattle, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye children of men, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O let Israel bless the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye priests of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye servants of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, ye holy and humble men of heart, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
O Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

(Canticle of the Three Holy Children, from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
(Gloria in excelsis Deo)
Praise him, all creatures here below,
Praise him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

(Traditional doxology)

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS (CONT.)

2 . THE TREE OF LIFE

The tree of life my soul hath seen,
Laden with fruit, and always green;
The trees of nature fruitless be
Compared with Christ the apple tree.

This beauty doth all things excel;
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell
The glory which I now can see
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.

The tree of life . . .

For happiness I long have sought,
And pleasure dearly I have bought;
I missed for all, but now I see
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.

I'm wearied with my former toil,
Here I shall sit and rest awhile;
Under the shadow I will be
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.

The tree of life . . .

This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,
It keeps my dying faith alive;
Which makes my soul in haste to be
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.

The tree of life . . .

*(from the collection of Joshua Smith,
New Hampshire, 1784)*

3. HYMN TO THE CREATOR OF LIGHT

Glory be to thee, O Lord, glory be to thee,
Creator of the visible light, the sun's ray, the
flame of fire.
Creator also of the light invisible and intellec-
tual,
That which is known of God, the light invis-
ible.
Glory be to thee, O Lord, glory be to thee,
Creator of the light,
for writings of the law, glory be to thee,
for oracles of prophets, glory be to thee,
for melody of psalms, glory be to thee,
for wisdom of proverbs, glory be to thee,
experience of histories, glory be to thee,
a light which never sets.
God is the Lord, who hath showed us light.

Light, who dost my soul enlighten;
Sun, who all my life dost brighten;
Joy, the sweetest man e'er knoweth;
Fount, whence all my being floweth.
From thy banquet let me measure,
Lord, how vast and deep its treasure;
Through the gifts thou here dost give us,
As thy guest in heaven receive us.

*(J. Franck (1618–77), tr. Catherine Winkworth (poet)
(adapted)*

(Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), tr. Alexander Whyte)

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS (CONT.)

4. O LORD, HOW MANIFOLD ARE THY WORKS

O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all;
the earth is full of thy riches.

Thou cover'dst it with the deep like as with a garment: the waters stand in the hills.

He sendeth the springs into the rivers: which run among the hills.

All beasts of the field drink thereof: and the wild asses quench their thirst.

Beside them shall the fowls of the air have their habitation: and sing among the branches.

He bringeth forth grass for the cattle: and green herb for the service of men.

The trees of the Lord also are full of sap: even the cedars of Libanus which he hath planted;

Wherein the birds make their nests: and the fir-trees are a dwelling for the stork.

The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats: and so are the stony rocks for the conies.

The lions roaring after their prey: do seek their meat from God.

The sun ariseth, and they get them away together: and lay them down in their dens.

Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour until the evening.

O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all;

the earth is full of thy riches.

The glorious Majesty of the Lord shall endure for ever:

the Lord shall rejoice in his works.

(from Psalm 104)

For all the gifts of God's creation fashioned by his mighty hand:

Earth and heaven, and all things living springing up at his command;

To God on high be endless glory, praise and honour to his Name,

Who was, and is, and ever shall be, through eternity the same.

How rich and fair his works of nature, bird and beast and tree and flower;

All that lives, and has its being under God's almighty power!

To him who reigns in endless glory, praise and honour to his Name,

Who was, and is, and ever shall be, through eternity the same.

Amen.

(John Rutter)

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS (CONT.)

5. THE GIFT OF EACH DAY

The gift of each day rising out of darkness:
the promise of light and the birth of new life,
the dawn of new hope and a new beginning,
if we turn to the light;

The gift of each day stirring all around us:
the sights of the earth, and sea, and sky,
Forever fresh as the day we first saw them,
forever new as creation's first day.

Domine, gratias agimus tibi;

Lord God, we give you thanks, blessing, and praise.

Behold creation, so filled with miracles,

Benedictus es, benedictus es, Domine.

The gift of each day has been freely granted:
the gift of creation in glory revealed.

We thank you, Lord, for all its blessings,
we thank you, Lord, for the gift of each day,
your good gift of each day,
we thank you, Lord, for the gift of each day.

(John Rutter)

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS (CONT.)

6. BELIEVE IN LIFE

Believe in life as a stream ever flowing;

Believe in life as a tree ever growing:

The tree of life, with its branches high in the sky
and its roots so deep in the earth.

Believe in hope as a flame ever burning;

Believe in hope, like the springtime returning;

Believe in hope, lift your eyes up unto the hills,
whence comes our help from the Lord,
the Lord who made the heaven and earth.

Every step that you take could start a journey,

All the strangers you meet could turn to friends.

If you open your eyes new worlds will arise

if you just believe in your life,

believe in your hopes, believe in your dreams.

The stream rolls onward; all things must pass.

Our earthly days are short, all flesh as grass,

But through all ages long since time began,

There stands the tree of life, God's sign to man.

(John Rutter)

The tree of life my soul hath seen,

Laden with fruit, and always green;

The trees of nature fruitless be

Compared with Christ the apple tree. Amen.

(from the collection of Joshua Smith, New Hampshire, 1784)

CONDUCTOR & ACCOMPANISTS

DR. H. MORRIS STEVENS, JR—CONDUCTOR

Dr. H. Morris Stevens, Jr., is the Director of Music Ministry at St. Theresa Catholic Church in Austin, Texas. In May 2020, he retired from St. Edward's University where he served for 13 years as Head of the Music Department. While at St. Edward's University, he founded the Masterworks Project, which became a leading Community Outreach Music program consisting of a large Chorus and full Orchestra. During those 13 years, the Masterworks Singers toured every two years, and gave concerts in such countries as Ireland, Scotland, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland.

Dr. Stevens is recognized as a clinician/conductor of Honor Choirs in many states and adjudicates choral competitions nationally. Throughout his career he has commissioned many new choral works from outstanding composers. The Masterworks Singers have so far, commissioned four major works with the support of the Edward D. Anderson Fund.

Dr. Stevens is most proud of his wonderful family, his wife Polly, his children, Sarah, Patrick and Rebekah, their wonderful spouses, and his six grandchildren, Ruaridh, Genevieve, Bernadette, Margot, Murray & Ruby.

SUSAN NEFF, PIANIST

Susan Neff spent 32 years in the music/choral classroom retiring from public school teaching in 2014. Her next three years she accompanied choirs in various school districts and supervised music student teachers at the University of Texas. She returned to the private school classroom for 3 years as the choral/piano teacher at Hyde Park High School. She now continues to accompany and consult for school choir programs. She is also a pianist for the gam choir at St. Theresa Catholic Church in Austin, Tx. She lives in Pflugerville where she loves spending time with her grown sons David and Mark, daughter in law Lindsey, and special Mimi time with her 7-year-old grandson Dylan.

MARK STERN, ORGANIST

Mark Stern is a native Austinite and has lived in Central Texas his whole life. He joined the Masterworks Singers in the Fall of 2016 and has been a tenor in the group ever since. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, with a minor in Music, and a Master of Arts in Psychological Research. During his undergraduate education, Mark studied organ with Dr. John Schmidt and is currently studying organ privately with Dr. Eun Joo Fierro. Mark is a Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Texas State University and teaches a variety of classes, particularly in the cognitive psychology field. In addition to his work at Texas State, Mark is the Organist at The Church at Highland Park & Associate Organist at St. Theresa Catholic Church.

CHORAL PERSONNEL

SOPRANO

Cheryl Alvarado
Ann Benson
Nancy Brady
Tami Cole
Elizabeth Danze
Dr. Leonore Frierson-Stroud
Iris Garcia
Marett Hanes
Anne Klock
Martha Kuhl
Hannah Martin
Amber-Nicole McIntire *
Stacey McTaggart
Harmony Muse
Teresa Nguyen
Dr. AnnMarie Olson
Molly O'Neal
Rebecca Peace
Sara Radebaugh
Stephanie Rayl *
Molly Sheehan
Polly Stevens
Arianne Thorne
Katie Vukovics
Rose Wiederkehr
Martha Zornes

ALTO

Julie Adams
Emily Burns
Julia Campos
Colleen Cawthon
Dr. Lydia Coffman
Barbara Colicchio
Pamela Dowd Bohn
Donna Gervase
Mimi Graser
Chacha Guerrero
Cindy Hager
Patricia Jacobs
Rosemary Kass
Kathryn King Coleman
Sue Kemp
Renee Lai
Dona LeBlanc
Janet Martin
Marty Moulthrop
Lauren Myrick *
Kristy Oliver Jones *
Ann Peace
Toni Powell
Marni Roberson
Dr. Megan Robinson
Mary Louise Shack
Joydene Ternus
Colleen Webb

TENOR

Jack Byrom*
Earl Carter
Guillermo Delgado *
Michael Gianotti
Jose Guerrero
Tim Hissam
Peter Jacobs
Jason Kutac
Jerome LeBlanc
Mark Stern *
Dana Taipale
Shane Walden

BASS

Jim Coffman
Michael Davis
John Diaz
Colwyn Dunlap
Gary Graser
Kevin Healy
Trevor Heim *
Nigel Jacobs
Kelan Latimer *
Mike Monahan
Philip O'Neill
Vincent Pham
Gary Pyle
Chris Rankin
Doug Rensi

***denotes Choir 1 in
Movement 3**

ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

PIANO

Susan Neff

FLUTE

Katherine White

TRUMPET

Matthew Hernandez

Kenken Gorder

TROMBONE

Matthew Flores

BASS TROMBONE

Michael Dorato

PERCUSSION/TIMPANI

Daniel Dickinson

VIOLIN I

Melissa Ruof

Walter Romanko

Elizabeth Jackson

VIOLIN II

Ellie Hunt

Annie Bowers

Kay Mueller

VIOLA

Robert Radmer

Jen Moon

CELLO

John Cox

Mary Beth Widhalm

BASS

Amanda Aubrey

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rev. Larry Covington — Pastor, St. Theresa Catholic Church

The Hospitality Ministry at St. Theresa Catholic Church

Staff of St. Theresa Catholic Church & School

OPEN INVITATION TO JOIN MASTERWORKS SINGERS

The Masterworks Singers organization is a community of individuals who love the best of choral music. Since its beginning, it has never excluded anyone who wished to experience the joy of sharing the exploration of choral music with friends. We have the mission of peace through the beauty of music. We continually invite all individuals who wish to share in this mission and joy of music making to consider joining.

To be included in the Masterworks Singers mailing list, please email Dr. Morris Stevens
at

morris_stevens@masterworkssingers.org

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