

## A Festive Sound

Laura Heimes, soprano; Luthien Brackett, mezzo-soprano; Jeffrey Thompson, tenor; Andrew Padgett, bass;  
Julie Andrijeski, Boel Gidholm, Daniel Elyar, violins;  
Kiri Tollaksen, cornetto;  
Liza Malamut, Ben David Aronson, Garrett Lahr, trombones;  
J. Tracy Mortimore, violone; Deborah Fox, theorbo;  
Naomi Gregory, organ

December 3, 2023 | 4:00pm  
Downtown United Presbyterian Church, Rochester  
pre-concert talk at 3:15pm

La Venetiana Ludovico Viadana (c.1560-1624)  
Der Engel Sprach Heinrich Schutz (1585-1672)

Angelus ad pastores ait Raffaella Aleotti (c.1570-c.1646)  
Angelus ad pastores ait Sulpitia Cesis (1577-c.1617)  
Angelus ad pastores ait Andrea Gabrieli (1533-1585)

Symphonia 3 a 4, op. 2 Nikolaus a Kempis (1600-1676)  
O qualis hodie in caelestis Bonifacio Graziani? (1604-1664)  
Laudate Dominum Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

Der Sionitin Wiegenlied: Johann Theile (1646-1724)  
*Nun ich singe, Gott*

### Intermission

Magnificat Johann Rudolf Ahle (1625-1673)

Ad gaudia, ad iubila: Maria Xaviera Peruchona (1652-1709)  
*mottetto del Santo Natale*

Sonatina Gottfried Reiche (1667-1774)  
Natus est Jesus Philipp Friedrich Böddecker (1607-1683)

Fantasia del sesto tono Giovanni Gabrieli (1557-1612)  
Canzon per sonar noni toni Giovanni Gabrieli

Das newgebohren Kindelein: Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)  
*Weinachtskantate, BuxVW113*

Es ist ein Ros entsprungen arr. Michael Praetorius (1560-1629)

## Program Notes

People often ask how we come up with our concert programs. In this case it started out as a general idea (“Hey, let’s do a big Christmas concert to celebrate our upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> season”), and then became a process of defining (“let’s have singers, brass, and strings”, “there’s a lot of great German Christmas music and they were influenced by the Italians, ok”). Along the way, it became a completely collaborative effort, drawing on the constellation of our performers’ interests and specialties. I’d like to thank every one of our performers here today for their advice and input. Extra thanks go to Ben David Aronson, who helped to guide the original concept, provided valuable advice on instrumentation, spent many hours patiently looking for scores, and agonized with me over which great pieces to cut so we wouldn’t have a four- hour long concert; and to Jeffrey Thompson, who sent suggestions from his impressive experience and produced musical editions and parts faster than I ever imagined possible.

It turns out there is a lot of Christmas music from the baroque period! For today’s program, we narrowed that down to German and Italian music of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, still an almost overwhelming list of possibilities. We focused on the varied instrumentation, and on composers whose works were unusual or new to us, with a few exceptions for some well-known and beloved Christmas pieces. The pieces fall naturally into groups of instruments or mixed groups: voices together or as solos; all strings; all brass; all the instruments without voices; all the voices without instruments; everyone together.

We also were intrigued by groupings of pieces, and making connections between texts that told part of the Christmas story, such as the set all based on the *Angelus ad pastores* text. We were thrilled to find settings by two women composers whose music is being rediscovered, thanks to work and new editions by Candace Smith and Bruce Dickey. Aleotti and Cesis were both nuns living and working in convents, which like many at the time, had vitally active and renowned musical ensembles, consisting of both singers and instrumentalists. Smith has shown that some of the parts, if too low for women, could be sung up an octave, or played or doubled on instruments, or the whole piece transposed to fit the forces better; there are even notations in the music encouraging those options. Cesis was a nun at the convent of S. Geminiano in Modena; she published her *Motetti spirituali* in 1619, when she was forty-two. Aleotti was a nun at San Vito in Ferrara and published her *Sacrae Cantiones* in 1593.

In another connection, the setting of *Der Engel Sprach* by Schütz is a musical homage to the *Angelus* setting by Andrea Gabrieli in that it is closely based on the Gabrieli piece, with the text in German instead of Latin. And we enjoyed the connection that Schütz, who was German, went to Venice twice. The first time he was there for three years and studied music with Giovanni Gabrieli, who was the only person that Schütz ever named as his teacher, and who was the nephew of Andrea Gabrieli. The second time he went to Venice, it is thought that he met Monteverdi.

One particular aspect of the Christmas story that seems irresistible to many composers is the lullaby, the rocking of Jesus in the cradle. A good lullaby allows for a change in musical texture, some drone notes perhaps, and repeating motifs that signify the soothing calm of impending sleep. You’ll hear this in the *Ad gaudia, ad iubila* of Maria Xaviera Peruchona, an Ursuline nun in a convent near

Novara, Italy. From an aristocratic family, she took her vows at age 16 and in 1675 published one volume of sacred music which consists of eighteen motets for voices and instruments.

You'll also hear an extended lullaby in Theile's *Nun ich singe, Gott*, whose title, *Wiegenlied*, means Lullaby. Johann Theile was a composer, music theorist, court musician, teacher, and a law student who never completed his course of study. He studied with Schütz, and he taught Buxtehude, thereby fitting beautifully into our web of musical connections. Bödekker's *Natus est Jesus* also contains sections of lullaby (as well as a lively ciacconna!). Very little is known about this composer except that he was a church organist in Stuttgart.

Today you'll also hear instrumental music for each group (strings/brass), as well as mixed ensembles. The Viadana canzona *La Venetiana* is from his only instrumental publication, opus 18, in which each piece is named for an Italian city; indeed, he traveled throughout Italy and worked in many different cities as a cleric and *maestro di capella*. Giovanni Gabrieli had a celebrated life as a musician, and maintained close relationships with his family, including his uncle Andrea. Giovanni worked in Munich and in his hometown of Venice, serving as *maestro di capella* at St. Marks and San Rocco. Gottfried Reiche, most famously Bach's 1<sup>st</sup> trumpeter in Leipzig, may also have played other brass instruments including the horn and the cornett. Trained in the Stadtpfeiffer tradition in Weissenfels, a known center for high standards of trumpet playing, Reiche lived and worked most of his life in Leipzig, from 1688 until his death in 1734. Also a composer, his only surviving works include a set of 24 "Quatricinia" for cornett and trombones, which include the Sonatina you will hear this afternoon. Nicolaus a Kempis was actually a Flemish composer and organist working in Brussels, but his compositions did much to introduce the latest Italian musical styles, particularly for string instruments.

In addition, you'll hear vocal music that features each group: the Ahle *Magnificat* contrasts the voices with trombones and cornetto, and the Theile and Buxtehude works trade off voices and strings. These contrasts between choirs of different sounds playing off against each other in a polychoral texture are one of the fundamental characteristics of the early baroque period.

Whether or not you celebrate Christmas, we hope you will enjoy this bounty of beautiful and uncommonly-heard music! --Deborah Fox