



WILLIAM MATHIAS: SALVATOR MUNDI

Alle psalite cum luya

Montpellier Codex, French (13th century)

Ther is no rose of swych vertu

Anonymous, English (1420)

Orto Sole Serene/Origo Viri/Virga Iesse/Ave Maria

Anonymous, English (13th century)

O Nobilis Nativitas/O Mira Dei/O Decus Virgineum/Apparuit

Anonymous, English (13th century)

Edi beo thu, hevene quene

Anonymous, English (14th century)

Coventry Carol

Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors (1591)

Alleluya: A nywe werk

Anonymous, English (15th century)

INTERMISSION

Salvator Mundi

William Mathias (1934-1992)

Linnea Erickson and Melissa Grant, piano

- I. Make we Merry
- II. Mirabile Mysterium
- III. Be we Merry in this Feast
- IV. Lullay
Carey Crows and Rachel Mast, soloists
- V. Susanni
- VI. Christe, Redemptor Omnium
- VII. Welcome, Yule

A Note on the Program

William Mathias's carol sequence, *Salvator Mundi*, has been on my "to-perform list" for years now, but it wasn't until this season that La Caccina finally had the opportunity to sing this rarely-programmed work. I first experienced Mathias's music in middle school, and was immediately captivated by the shifting tonalities and thoughtful harmonization present in Mathias's writing. Like Caccina-favorite Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*, William Mathias uses modality and ancient texts in *Salvator Mundi* to hearken back to Medieval and Renaissance music. Unlike Britten, however, Mathias chose a more contemporary instrumentation, using piano 4-hands to accompany the voices, rather than harp. (*Salvator Mundi* is also occasionally performed with a suite of percussion instruments and strings in addition to the piano, but our ensemble calls for a more intimate sound.)

The result is a sequence of carols that transcends temporal classification, sonically skipping back and forth through the centuries and highlighting the timelessness of the Christmas Story and the warmth and community that surrounds it. From the 20th-century tritones and modal scales in "Mirabile Mysterium" to what one singer calls Mathias's "80s triumph chords" in "Be We Merry in this Feast" to the mystical, chant-based "Christe Redemptor Omnium," *Salvator Mundi* uses musical language from all eras, weaving them together to create a unified sound that is as familiar as it is surprising.

To complement Mathias, we chose our favorite Medieval carols from *Beata Virgo*, our immersive and contemplative Christmas program from the past two seasons. Like Mathias, the composers of these carols used modes and drew from a variety of textual sources. Indeed, two of the motets, "O Nobilis Nativitas/etc." and "Orto Sole Serene/etc." are polyglot works, in which each voice part sings its own text, independent of the other parts. While this compositional practice was part of the reason the Vatican banned polyphony from the liturgy in 1322, citing the difficulty of discerning *any* text when so many words were being sung at once, there is something evocative of hearing so many voices telling different stories in a way that is still harmonious.

This program would not have been possible without the addition of three women to our musical roster for this evening. The first two are pianists Linnea Erickson and Melissa Grant, whose sensitive and thoughtful treatment of Mathias's difficult piano lines makes the piece sparkle with energy. The third is the ninth and newest member of La Caccina, Lily Wirth, who sings literally every voice part on this program and whose versatility and musicality are unparalleled.

In this challenging political climate, La Caccina is more committed than ever to making a place for women in music, both in Chicago and across the nation. As a new 501(c)3 organization, we are dedicated to highlighting the versatility of the female voice, and to providing opportunities for our artists to perform exquisite treble works, and for our audiences to hear them. *Salvator Mundi* is such a work, and we hope you enjoy the music you hear tonight. I also hope that you'll consider becoming a part of La Caccina's mission, and help us to ensure that women's voices continue to be heard in choral music for years to come.