
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2005
8 PM, DAVIS COMMUNITY CHURCH

UC DAVIS CHAMBER SINGERS
Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

PROGRAM

In Nativitatem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Canticum / Song of the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ

Praeludium / Prelude

Récit de l'historien / Recitative of Evangelist

Heidi Gerard, *soprano I*

Lisa Sueyres, *soprano II*

[Air of the Angel]

Lisa Sueyres, *soprano*

Chorus of Shepherds

Marche / March

[Recitative of Evangelist]

Christopher Bennett, *baritone*

[Air of a Shepherd]

Sara Marostica, *soprano*

Peter Ludden, *tenor*

Alicia Flor, *soprano*

PAUSE

Judicium Salomonis / The Judgment of Solomon

Historicus 1us (First Narrator)

Tres e populi (Three of the People)

Christopher Bennett, *bass*

Amanda Ou, *alto*

Peter Ludden, *tenor*

Nicolas Moore-Karppinen, *bass*

Kevin Gibbs, *tenor*

Salomon (Solomon)

Historicus 2us (Second Narrator)

Peter Ludden, *tenor*

Deus (God)

Paul Corujo, *bass*

Vera Mater (True Mother)

Gillian Watson, *soprano*

Falsa Mater (False Mother)

Meghan Eberhardt, *alto*

Populus (The People)

Chorus

GUEST ARTISTS

Kevin Gibbs, *tenor*
Judith Linsenberg & Vicki Boeckman, *recorders*
Michael Sand & Andrew Fouts, *violins*
Daria D'Andrea, *viola*
Jake Charkey, *violoncello*
Steven Lehning, *contrabass*
Phebe Craig, *organ*

ABOUT THE SOLOIST



Kevin Gibbs (tenor) recently made his fifth solo appearance with the San Francisco Symphony in Haydn's *Harmoniemesse*. He has received critical acclaim for his recent appearance with the California Symphony in the world premiere of Kevin Beaver's *Songs from the Discovery* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. A frequent oratorio soloist, he has performed with Cantabile Choral Guild (formerly Baroque Choral Guild) in Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil*, and Rautuvaara's *Vigilia*. In other recent appearances, Gibbs has performed with the early music ensemble Apollo's Fire in Bach's *St. John Passion* and with the Berkeley Symphony in Haydn's *Harmoniemesse*. In addition to solo engagements, Gibbs is an experienced choral musician. He performs this season with many of the Bay Area's most recognized arts organizations, including the San Francisco Opera Chorus, the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, the Philharmonia Baroque Chorale, and the American Bach Soloists.

UC DAVIS CHAMBER SINGERS

Jeffrey Thomas, conductor

Soprano

Alicia Flor
Heidi Gerard
Marjorie Halloran
Sarah Hepp
Sara Marostica
Lisa Sueyres
Isabel To
Gillian Watson

Alto

Priti Dave
Meghan Eberhardt
Julia Lazzara
Joy Li
Julie Lujano
Johanna (Josie) Nevitt
Eleni Nikitas
Susanna Peeples
Jamie Romnes
Isabel Wei

Tenor

Adam Cobb
Peter Ludden
Chris Neff
Amanda Ou
Jacob Ritter

Bass

Christopher Bennett
Paul Corujo
Tom Dotan
Aaron Driver
Stephen Fasel
Nicolas Moore-Karppinen
Mohammed (Yahya) Rouhani
Augustus (Gus) Walsh

Marc-Antoine Charpentier

The exact date of Marc-Antoine Charpentier's birth in Paris is lost to us, but it probably was around 1640, give or take a decade. While still a youth he spent several years in Rome, studying with Carissimi, a composer best remembered today as the inventor of the oratorio. Charpentier brought back from Italy not only a fine sense of dramatic church music, but also a keen appreciation for the ability of music to depict intense emotions, particularly through the introduction of chromaticism. These characteristics, when blended with Charpentier's native French taste for suave melody, dense, dissonant harmonies and a lively instrumental palette, produced a remarkable and distinctive musical language. The richness of his style did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries, whether for good ("Ninths and tritones glittered under his hands") or for ill ("Such mournful chords grate on our ears"), but was a clear expression of his philosophy: "Diversity is the soul of music."

After his return from Italy, Charpentier seems to have plunged headlong into Parisian musical life, in which he was enormously successful, even without ever holding an official post at court. Around 1670 he began a fruitful collaboration with Molière, composing for the theatrical troupe that became (in 1680) the Comédie Française. He was employed during the 1680s by the Duchess of Guise, one of the most benevolent patrons of music in France. All the while, he steadily built his reputation as composer of church music, receiving commissions from a wide range of ecclesiastical establishments. For unknown reasons, Charpentier gravitated towards the Jesuits, composing occasional works for a number of their colleges, and finally being named to the post of *maître de musique* for the principal Jesuit church in Paris, St. Louis. The church is still there (now called St. Paul-St. Louis), next to the St-Paul Métro stop in the Marais. The pinnacle of Charpentier's career came in 1698, when he was appointed *maître de musique* of the Sainte-Chapelle. It is difficult to imagine now, when that exquisite building is embedded within a warren of offices which contain the bureaucracy of the French judicial system, but in those days the Sainte-Chapelle was the chapel of the royal palace on the Île de la Cité; only the director of music at the royal chapel at Versailles ranked higher. Here he remained until his death in 1704.

In Nativitatem D[omini] N[ostri] J[esu] C[hristi] Canticum is a motet or cantata based on a text from Luke 2:8-16. It is a typical pastorale, featuring a prelude depicting the calm of the night before the shepherds are told of the birth of Jesus. In a scene that reminds us of other settings (by Bach and Handel), the angel comes to the shepherds and (predictably) sings an aria. The shepherds then sing a rousing 6-part chorus as they prepare to make their journey to the crib. But the work's most touching moment is the final movement. The evangelist (this time a baritone; in the initial scene *two* sopranos) warns us that we are about to hear an "artless" but heartfelt song of adoration. It is hardly artless.

Charpentier's studies with Carissimi and his experience writing for the theater were put to good use in his *Judicium Salomonis* ("The Judgment of Solomon"). This is one of the few works of Charpentier to come down to us with a date: "for the red mass in the Palace in 1702." The *Messe Rouge* was an annual event celebrating the convocation of Parlement, a body whose function was judicial, rather than legislative. Its members consisted of provincial judges, who wore scarlet robes; hence the ceremony's name. The story of *Judicium Salomonis* is admirably suited to the occasion. After a lengthy introductory First Part, the oratorio gets down to business: the re-telling of the episode of the infant who is the subject of a dispute between two women. Wise King Solomon sees through the False Mother's subterfuge and pronounces judgment, flushing out the truth. Innocence is protected, wickedness is punished. In case the assembled jurists didn't get the point, the final chorus addressed them directly, even commenting on their wardrobe: "And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king and wondered, seeing in him the wisdom of God. Likewise, ye empurpled leaders,...rejoice...For the Lord shall raise up thy justice as a light, and thy judgment shall shine forth as the noonday."

—Jeffrey Thomas & Victor Gavenda

TEXTS

In Nativitatem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Canticum /
Song of the Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Recitative

The shade of the icy night covered all the earth and plunged everyone into a deep sleep. And the shepherds of Judea kept watch over their flocks. And, lo, an angel of the Lord came and stood beside them, and the glory of the Lord shone about them. Overcome were the shepherds with great fear; but then the angel said to them:

Air

Fear not, shepherds. For, behold now, I bring good tidings of joy, which shall be to all people. For today in the city of David a Savior unto you is born. And to you shall this be the sign: Ye shall find the babe all wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying within a manger. Quickly go ye, shepherds, and there adore Him.

Chorus

Arise now, let us hasten to go unto Bethlehem. There shall we see the Child who is born to us. There shall we offer praise and there adore Him, God now in the form of a sinner lowly disguised. Why linger, why tarry? O shepherds, so drowsy?

Recitative

Anon these humble shepherds did arrive at the place wherein the Child had been born. And when they were come into the house, they saw

Mary and Joseph, and the Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And kneeling there, they sang of their adoration in artless but devoted song of praise, saying:

Air and Chorus

O little boy, o tender one, o poor little newborn baby, save that which is good! You left your heavenly home; you were born on earth in order to take upon yourself our wretchedness.

O highest Goodness, o most high God, today you were made a lowly human being; you who existed from everlasting, and who are the great Ruler whose watchful eye protects earthly rulers.

Born of a Virgin's blessed womb, by an act of God you were given to be Her Son. All praise to the Flower of the Virgin, all praise to the hope of humankind, the fountain whose flowing water cleanses our sin.

Judicium Salomonis / The Judgment of Solomon

[Prelude]

Prima Pars / Part One

First Narrator

The kingdom of Israel was established in the hand of Solomon, and the Lord God of his father was with him. And Solomon spoke unto all his people, to the commanders of his people, and to the judges; and he went with all the congregation to the heights of Gibeon, there to sacri-

fice victims in burnt offerings to the Lord.

Chorus [Narrator]

Then the whole congregation rejoiced when they pledged their vows willingly, for they offered them to God with their whole heart. The priests with trumpets and the Levites with instruments of music sang praises. And the sons of Sion sang with them, saying:

Chorus [People]

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is gracious, for his mercy endureth forever.

Let Israel now confess that he is gracious, for his mercy endureth forever.

Let the house of Aaron now confess that he is gracious, for his mercy endureth forever.

Three of the People

And likewise the king rejoiced greatly, and falling prostrate on the ground he adored God. Then, looking on high, hand stretched forth to heaven, he said joyfully:

Solomon

Blessed art thou, O Lord God of Israel, and highly to be praised. But who am I, and what my people, that we are able to offer thee such an abundance of victims? For all things are thine, and we offer to thee nothing that thy hand has not given us. Yet I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart and hast pleasure in uprightness; wherefore in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered to thee the things that are thine. And I have seen thy people, which are here, likewise offer to thee with great joy the things that are thine.

Chorus [Narrator]

Therefore as they were all rejoicing together, with trumpets and harps resounding, with cymbals and instruments of music sounding, with voices dropping from the heights to the depths and rising from the depths to the heights, far and wide was heard the sound of praising, singing, and saying:

Chorus [People]

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is gracious, for his mercy endureth forever.

Let Israel now confess that he is gracious, for his mercy endureth forever.

Let the house of Aaron now confess that he is gracious, for his mercy endureth forever.

Seconde Partie / Part Two
[Prelude]

Second Narrator

And the following night God appeared to him in a dream, saying:

God

Ask of me, Solomon, what you wish I should give thee.

Solomon

O Lord God, thou hast made thy servant king. But I am a little child and know not how to go out or come in; yet have I been established as king in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore to me, thy servant, wisdom and knowledge, to judge thy people and to distinguish between good and evil. For who would be able to rule worthily this thy people that is so great unless thou enlightenest him, O Lord my God?

God

Because thou hast not asked for thyself long life, nor riches, nor the

lives of thine enemies, but hast asked for wisdom and knowledge for a discerning power of judgment: behold, I have done to thee according to thy words and have given thee a wise and understanding heart, inasmuch that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee, what thou hast not asked, both riches and glory, inasmuch that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And if thou wilt walk before me as walked my servant David your father, then will I add long and many days to thee beyond many days.

Chorus [Narrator]

And when morning was come Solomon awoke and understood that it was a dream. And when from the heights of Gibeon he returned to Jerusalem, he stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord and offered up burnt offerings, and prepared peace offerings, and made a sumptuous feast for all his following. And as he was eating and drinking joyfully with them, there came to the king two women, of whom one spoke thus:

True Mother

Pardon, my lord: I and this woman were dwelling in one house, and I was delivered of a child with her in the house; and the third day after I was delivered, this woman was delivered also, and we were together, and there was no other with us in the house. And this woman's son died in the night because she overlaid it; but she arose in the silence of midnight and took my son from beside me and laid him in her bosom, and her own son, which was dead, she laid in my bosom. And when I rose in the morning to suckle my child, behold, he was dead; but when I had considered him carefully, I realized he was not my son.

False Mother

It is not so as thou sayest: thy son is dead, but mine liveth.

True Mother

It is not so as thou sayest: my son liveth, but thine is dead.

Solomon

This one sayeth, "My son liveth, but thine is dead"; and the other answereth, "Thy son is dead, but mine liveth."

False Mother

It is not so as she sayest: her son is dead, but mine liveth.

True Mother

It is not so as she sayest: my son liveth, but hers is dead.

Solomon

Bring unto me a sword: divide the living child in two parts and give half to the one and half to the other.

True Mother

Ah, my lord king, I beg thee, give her the living child and slay him not. Not mine but hers let him be.

False Mother

Neither mine nor thine let him be, but divide him.

Solomon

Give her the living child; she that hath shed such tears, she that so feared for the child hath shown herself to be the mother.

Chorus [Narrator]

And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king and wondered, seeing in him the wisdom of God.

Likewise, ye empurpled leaders, to whom has been given from on high equal and consistent power of judgment to accord to each person his due, rejoice, ye defenders of widows and guardians of orphans; rejoice and exult in the Lord. For the Lord shall raise up thy justice as a light, and thy judgment shall shine forth as the noontide.