

The Memorial Church of Harvard University

Music Notes for Sunday, September 11, 2022

Sir William Harris studied at the Royal College of Music under Charles Wood and Sir Walford Davies: he became Walford Davies's assistant at London's Temple Church before becoming organist of New College, Oxford, in 1919. In 1923 he was appointed Professor of Organ and Harmony at the Royal College of Music, and in 1933 became organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, where he remained until 1961. His double-choir motet *Bring Us, O Lord God*, was written in 1959 for the choir of St. George's Chapel, and is a setting of John Donne's "A Sermon Preached at White-hall, February 29, 1628." The composer employs a rich harmonic palette and often sets the choirs in dialogue, evoking a powerful image of the heavenly music. The work seems particularly appropriate for today, both as a remembrance to those who died on September 11, 2001, and in light of the recent death of Queen Elizabeth II.

One of the most original voices in twentieth-century American church music, Larry King, was Director of Music at Trinity Church, Wall Street, for over twenty years. *Let Us Love in Deed and Truth* is based on the First Epistle of John; the organ accompaniment utilizes a wide variety of colors, while the choral writing is led by the rich sonority of tenors and basses singing in unison.

David Conte is Professor of Music at San Francisco Conservatory and is particularly known for his widely-performed choral works. Today's prelude, *Recollection* (*Soliloquy* No. 2), was premiered on New Year's Eve 2000 in memory of Janet Yui Ty at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City. The piece features a simple melody on several colorful solo sounds which grows in intensity before returning to a peaceful conclusion.

From 1927 to 1962 Leo Sowerby was organist and choirmaster at St. James Episcopal Cathedral in Chicago, where he wrote a considerable amount of ecclesiastical music, including the cantata *The Canticle of the Sun* (1944), which won a Pulitzer Prize. Sowerby was repeatedly drawn to autumnal themes and texts: his lively "program overture" *Comes Autumn Time*, originally written for the organ in 1916, was later transcribed for orchestra as part of *Prairie: a Poem for Orchestra*, which became the work that launched his career as a major symphonic composer. The toccata-like opening captures in musical form the wondrous breezy nature of an American Fall.