

The Memorial Church of Harvard University Music Notes for Sunday, October 30, 2022

This weekend's Harvard University Choir reunion culminates in today's service, and it is a thrill to be joined by so many of our alums, singing alongside the current choir. Heinrich Schütz ranks as the first German musician of true European standing, and its most important composer before the arrival of Johann Sebastian Bach. Schütz studied with Giovanni Gabrieli in Venice before moving to the Dresden court in 1617, where he remained for the rest of his long life. Today's motet comes from the 1648 *Geistliche Chormusik*, an important collection of 29 motets: *Selig sind die Toten* is a supreme example of the composer's art, and has become one of his most famous works, beloved by generations of UChoir singers.

The English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams—whose 150th birth-anniversary occurred earlier this month—studied with Parry, Wood, and Stanford at the Royal College of Music, London, before traveling to Europe for further study with Bruch in Berlin and Ravel in Paris. A gifted conductor and church organist, he was the musical editor of *The English Hymnal* (1906), and throughout his life remained an authority on hymnody and the folk music of the British Isles. Although not a churchman himself, Vaughan Williams contributed a remarkable quantity of music to the repertoire of the Anglican church; this morning's setting of the *Te Deum* was written for the enthronement of Archbishop of Canterbury Cosmo Lang, in December 1928. Majestic in scope and texture, it exemplifies the power of communal music-making being celebrated here this morning.

Amy Beach was America's first important female composer; largely self-taught, her husband was a lecturer in anatomy at Harvard, and she was part of an artistic circle that included Henry Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Celebrated for her orchestral and piano music—her important *Gaelic Symphony* was premiered by the BSO on October 30, 1896—she nevertheless produced a large number of choral works. This morning's *Peace I Leave With You* was published in 1891, and lays the groundwork for her most significant choral offering, the *Mass in E-flat*.

David Conte is Professor of Music at San Francisco Conservatory and is particularly known for his widely-performed choral and organ works. The prelude is his pensive *Soliloquy*: premiered at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1996, it is dedicated to the organ builder Walter Holtkamp, Jr., in celebration of his legacy in that art. Percy Fletcher was Musical Director at the Savoy and Drury Lane theaters, London, and is mainly remembered as an arranger and conductor of hit musicals in those famous spaces. *Festival Toccata* was written in 1915 and is dedicated to the virtuoso English organist and composer Edwin Lemare.