

The Memorial Church of Harvard University Music Notes for Sunday, December 4, 2022

Harold Darke studied at the Royal College of Music under Stanford, and served in the Royal Air Force. He held the post of organist and choirmaster of St. Michael's, Cornhill (City of London), continuously from 1916 to 1969 with the exception of the years 1941 to 1945 when he stood in at King's College, Cambridge, for Boris Ord, who was enlisted to serve in the second world war. The *Communion Service in E* was written for the choir of King's College and is a simple, elegant, and very singable setting of the Mass ordinary.

Charles Wood taught at the Royal College of Music, London, where his pupils included Ralph Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells. Wood only started composing music for the church in his later years, but it is for this repertoire that he is primarily remembered today. The beautiful anthem *Never Weather-Beaten Sail* sets words by the English composer, poet, and lutenist Thomas Campion, which are particularly appropriate for the season of Advent.

Jehan Alain was at the center of a circle of French organists that included Langlais and Duruflé, and he was already an esteemed player and composer when he was killed in action in World War II, at the age of 29. Influenced by the musical language of both Claude Debussy and Olivier Messiaen, today's prelude also shows the composer's fascination with the music of the far east (in the *Deuxième fantaisie*), and with renaissance and baroque music (in the *Variations*). The postlude is Alain's most famous work, *Litanies*: written to commemorate the death of his younger sister, the composer prefaces the score with these words: "*When, in its distress, the Christian soul can find no more words to implore the mercy of God, it repeats, endlessly, the same prayer with vehement faith. Reason reaches its limits, and only belief can chase its flight.*"

Never weather-beaten sail more willing bent to shore.
Never tired pilgrim's limbs affected slumber more,
Than my wearied sprite now longs to fly out of my troubled breast:
O come quickly, sweetest Lord, and take my soul to rest.

Ever blooming are the joys of Heaven's high Paradise.
Cold age deafs not there our ears nor vapor dims our eyes:
Glory there the sun outshines whose beams the blessed only see:
O come quickly, glorious Lord, and raise my sprite to thee!

Thomas Campion (1567-1620)