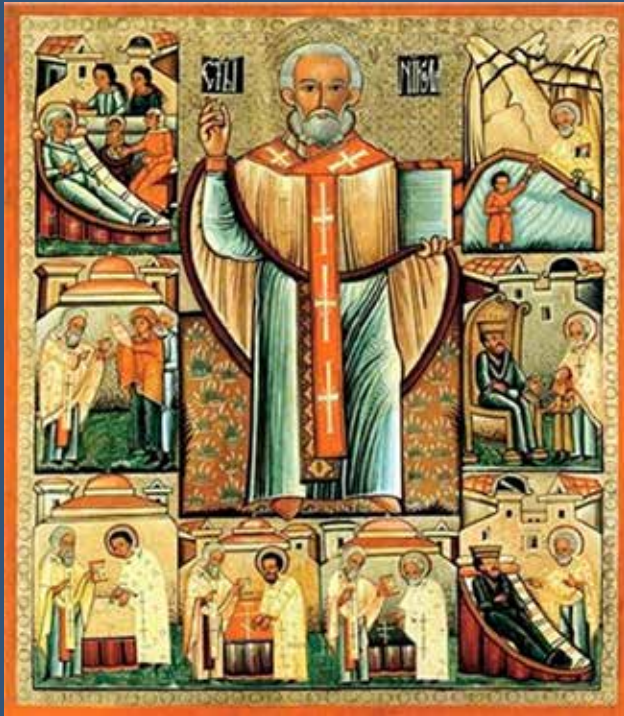




BLOOMINGTON CHAMBER SINGERS

BENJAMIN BRITTEN
SAINT NICOLAS
A CEREMONY OF CAROLS



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2021



ST. MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA



Our 52nd Season

Bloomington Chamber Singers

Gerald Sousa, Music Director

Brian Samarzea, Assistant Music Director

Claire Tafoya, Assistant to the Conductor

Nicholas Sienkiewicz, Gallery Chorus Conductor

***A Ceremony of Carols*, Op. 28**

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

Aubrey Shumway, harp

1. Procession
2. Wolcum Yole!
3. There is no Rose
- 4a. That yongë child

Suzanne Ryan-Melamed, treble solo

- 4b. Balulalow

Abby Henkel, treble solo

5. As dew in Aprille
6. This little Babe
7. Interlude

Aubrey Shumway, harp

8. In Freezing Winter Night

Claire Tafoya, treble solo

Lisa Kurz, treble solo

9. Spring Carol

Janice Bagwell, treble solo

Stephanie Tokarz, treble solo

10. Deo Gracias
11. Recession

PAUSE

Saint Nicolas, Op. 42

Benjamin Britten

Patrick Conklin, *Nicolas*

1. Introduction
2. The Birth of Nicolas
Cohen Powell, *The Boy Nicolas*
3. Nicolas devotes himself to God
4. He journeys to Palestine
5. He comes to Myra and is chosen Bishop
6. Nicolas from Prison
7. Nicolas and the Pickled Boys
8. His Piety and Marvellous Works
9. The Death of Nicolas

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

A Ceremony of Carols

Procession

Hodie Christus natus est:
Hodie Salvator apparuit;
Hodie in terra canunt angeli;
Laetantur archangeli;
Hodie exsultant justi dicentes;
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Alleluia!

Today Christ is born;
Today the Savior has appeared;
Today the angels sing,
The archangels rejoice;
Today the righteous exult, saying,
Glory to God in the highest! Alleluia!

Wolcum Yole!

Wolcum, Wolcum,
Wolcum be thou hevenè king,
Wolcum, born in one morning,
Wolcum, for whom we sall sing!

Welcome, Welcome,
Welcome to you, heavenly King.
Welcome, born one morning,
Welcome, for whom we shall sing!

Wolcum be ye, Stevene and Jon,
Wolcum, Innocentes every one,
Wolcum, Thomas marter one.

Welcome to you, Steven and John,
Welcome, all innocent children,
Welcome, Thomas, the martyred one.

Wolcum be ye, good New Yere,
Wolcum, Twelfth Day both in fere,
Wolcum, seintes lefe and dere.

Welcome, good New Year,
Welcome Twelfth Day, both in fear,
Welcome Saints left and dear.

Candelmesse, Quene of Bliss,
Wolcum bothe to more and lesse.
Wolcum be ye that are here,
Wolcum alle and make good cheer.
Wolcum alle another yere.

Candle Mass, Queen of bliss,
Welcome both to more and less.
Welcome you that are here,
Welcome all and make good cheer.
Welcome all another year.

Wolcum!

Welcome!

There is no Rose

There is no rose of such vertu
As is the rose that bare Jesu.
Alleluia.

There is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bore Jesus.
Alleluia.

For in this rose containèd was
Heaven and earth in litel space,
Res miranda.

For inside the Rose (Mary) were
heaven and earth in a little space.
Miraculous thing.

By that rose we may well see
There be one God in persons three,
Pares forma.

By that rose, we now may see,
There be one God in persons three.
Equal in form.

The aungels sungen the shepherds to:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gaudeamus.

Leave we all this werldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth.
Transeamus.

That yongë child

That yongë child when it gan weep
With song she lulled him asleep:
That was so sweet a melody
It passéd alle minstrelsy.

The nightingalë sang also:
Her song is hoarse and nought thereto:
Whoso attendeth to her song
And leaveth the first,
then doth he wrong.

Balulalow

O my deare hert, young Jesu sweit,
Prepare thy creddil in my spreit,
And I sall rock thee to my hert,
And never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermoir
With sanges sweit unto thy gloir;
The knees of my hert sall I bow,
And sing that richt Balulalow!

As dew in Aprille

I sing of a maiden that is makèles:
King of all kings to her son she ches.

He came also stille there his moder was,
As dew in Aprille that falleth on the grass.

He came also stille to his moder's bour,
As dew in Aprille that falleth on the flour.

He came also stille there his moder lay
As dew in Aprille that falleth on the spray.

Moder and mayden was never none but she:
Well such a lady Goddes moder be.

The angels sang to the shepherds,
Glory to God in the highest!
Let us rejoice.

Leave we all this worldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth.
Let us be transformed.

When that young child began to weep
With song, she lulled him to sleep.
It was such a sweet melody,
It surpassed all minstrelsy.

The nightingale sang also,
Her song is hoarse and not the same:
Whoever listens to her song
Instead of Mary's,
does wrong.

O my dear heart, young sweet Jesus,
Prepare your cradle in my spirit,
And I shall rock you in my heart,
And nevermore from you depart.

But I shall praise you evermore,
With sweet songs of your glory
The knees of my heart shall I bow
And sing the right "Lullaby."

I sing of a maiden that is matchless,
Her son was the King of all Kings.

From his mother he came to us quietly
As dew in April that falls on the grass.

His mother's labor was painless and quiet,
As dew in April that falls on the flower.

As His mother lay there, he came quietly,
As dew in April that falls on the flower branches.

Never has there been such a mother and maiden;
How fitting it is that this be God's mother.

This little Babe

This little Babe, so few days old,
Is come to rifle Satan's fold;
All hell doth at his presence quake,
Though he himself for cold do shake;
For in this weak unarmèd wise
The gates of hell he will surprise.

With tears he fights and wins the field,
His naked breast stands for a shield;
His battering shot are babish cries,
His arrows looks of weeping eyes;
His martial ensigns Cold and Need,
And feeble Flesh his warrior's steed.

His camp is pitchèd in a stall,
His bulwark but a broken wall;
The crib his trench, haystalks his stakes;
Of shepherds he his muster makes;
And thus, as sure his foe to wound,
The angels' trumps alarum sound.

My soul, with Christ join thou in fight,
Stick to the tents that he hath pight.
Within his crib is surest ward;
This little Babe will be thy guard.
If thou wilt foil thy foes with joy,
Then flit not from this heavenly Boy.

This little Babe so few days old
Has come to rifle Satan's fold.
All hell quakes at his presence,
Though he himself shivers.
For in this weak, unarmed guise
He will surprise the very gates of Hell!

With tears he fights and wins the field,
His naked breast stands for a shield;
His shots are his cries,
His arrows, the looks of his weeping eyes.
His martial ensigns are cold and need,
And his feeble flesh, his warrior's steed.

His camp is pitched in a stall,
His bulwark is a broken wall;
The crib his trench, haystalks are his stakes,
Of shepherds, he enlists the troops.
And sure of wounding the foe,
The angels sound the trumpets alarm.

My soul joins Christ in the fight,
Stay by the tents that he has pitched;
Within his crib is sure protection
The little babe will be your guard;
If Christ can foil your foes with joy,
Stay near the heavenly boy.

Interlude (Harp Solo)

In freezing winter night

Behold, a silly tender babe,
in freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies—
Alas, a piteous sight!

The inns are full; no man will yield
This little pilgrim bed.
But forced he is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud his head.

This stable is a Prince's court,
This crib his chair of State,
The beasts are parcel of his pomp,
The wooden dish his plate.

The persons in that poor attire
His royal liveries wear;
The Prince himself is come from heav'n;
This pomp is prizèd there.

With joy approach, O Christian wight,
Do homage to thy King,
And highly praise his humble pomp,
wich he from Heav'n doth bring.

Spring carol

Pleasure it is to hear iwis, the Birdès sing,
The deer in the dale, the sheep in the vale,
The corn springing.

It is always a pleasure to hear the birds sing,
To see the deer in the dale, the sheep in the vale,
the corn springing from the earth.

God's purvayance for sustenance,
It is for man, it is for man.

God supplies sustenance
For us all.

Then we always to give him praise,
And thank him than.

Then we should always give him praise
And give him thanks.

Deo Gracias

Deo Gracias!

Give thanks to God!

Adam lay ibounden, bounden in a bond,
Four thousand winter thought he not too long.

Adam was bound in sin for four thousand years,
although he thought this not too long.

And all was for an appil, an appil that he tok,
As clerkès finden written in their book.

It was all for an apple that he took,
As clerics find written in their books.

Ne had the appil takè ben, the appil take ben,
Ne haddè never our lady a ben hevenè queen.

Had the apple never been taken,
Then our Lady would never have been a
heavenly queen.

Blessèd be the time that appil takè was.
Therefore we moun singen, Deo Gracias!

Blessed be the time the apple was taken.
Therefore we must sing Thanks be to God!

Recession

Hodie Christus natus est:
Hodie Salvator apparuit:
Hodie in terra canunt angeli:
Laetantur archangeli:
Hodie exsultant justi, dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo. Alleluia!

Today Christ is born;
Today the Saviour has appeared;
Today the angels sing on earth,
The archangels rejoice;
Today the righteous exult, saying,
Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia!

Saint Nicolas

Text by Eric Crozier (1914–1994)

1. Introduction

[Chorus]

Our eyes are blinded by the holiness you bear.
The bishop's robe, the mitre and the cross of gold
Obscure the simple man within the Saint.
Strip off your glory, Nicolas, and speak!

[Nicolas]

Across the tremendous bridge of sixteen
hundred years
I come to stand in worship with you, as I stood
Among my faithful congregation long ago.
All who knelt beside me then are gone.
Their name is dust, their tombs are grass
and clay,
Yet still their shining seed of faith survives—
in you!
It weathers time, it springs again in you!
With you it stands like forest oak
Or withers with the grasses underfoot.
Preserve the living Faith for which your
fathers fought!
For Faith was won by centuries of sacrifice
And many martyrs died that you might
worship God.

[Chorus]

Help us, Lord! to find the hidden road
That leads from love to greater Love,
From faith to greater Faith.
Strengthen us, O Lord!
Screw up our strength to serve Thee
with simplicity.

2. The Birth of Nicolas

[Women]

Nicolas was born in answer to prayer
And leaping from his mother's womb he cried

[The boy Nicolas]

God be glorified!

Swaddling-bands and crib awaited him there
But Nicolas clapped both his hands and cried

[The boy Nicolas]

God be glorified!

Innocent and joyful, naked and fair,
He came in pride on earth to abide.

[The boy Nicolas]

God be glorified!

Water rippled Welcome! in the bath-tub by
his side.

He dived in open-eyed: he swam: he cried

[The boy Nicolas]

God be glorified!

When he went to church at Christmastide
He climbed up to the font to be baptized.

[The boy Nicolas]

God be glorified!

Pilgrims came to kneel and pray by his side.
He grew in grace, his name was sanctified.

[The boy Nicolas]

God be glorified!

Nicolas grew in innocence and pride
His glory spread in rainbow round
the countryside
'Nicolas will be a Saint!' the neighbours cried.

[The young man Nicolas]

God be glorified!

3. Nicolas devotes himself to God

[Nicolas]

My parents died. All too soon
I left the tranquil beauty of their home
And knew the wider world of man.
Poor Man! I found him solitary, racked
by doubt:
Born, bred, doomed to die
In everlasting fear of everlasting death:
The foolish toy of time, the darling of decay—
Hopeless, faithless, defying God.
Heartsick, in hope to mask the twisted face
of poverty,
I sold my lands to feed the poor.
I gave my goods to charity but Love
demanded more.
Heartsick, I cast away
All things that could distract my mind
From full devotion to His will.
I thrust my happiness behind but Love
desired more still.
Heartsick, I called on God
To purge my angry soul,
To be my only master, friend and guide.
I begged for sweet humility and Love
was satisfied.

4. He journeys to Palestine

[Men]

Nicolas sailed for Palestine
Across the sunlit seas.
The South West wind blew soft and fair,
Seagulls hovered through the air,
And spices scented the breeze.

Everyone felt that land was near:
All dangers now were past:
Except for one who knelt in prayer,
Fingers clasped and head quite bare,
Alone by mizzen-mast.
The sailors jeered at Nicolas,
Who paid them no regard,
Until the hour of sunset came
And up he stood and stopped their game
Of staking coins on cards.
Nicolas spoke and prophesied
A tempest far ahead.
The sailors scorned such words of fear,
Since sky and stars shone bright and clear
So 'Nonsense!' they all said.
Darkness was soon on top of them,
But still the South Wind blew.
The captain went below to sleep
And left the helmsman there to keep
His course with one of the crew.
Nicolas swore he'd punish them
For mocking at the Lord.
The wind arose, the thunder roared,
Lightning split the waves that poured
In wild cascades on board.
Waterspouts rose in majesty
Until the ship was tossed
Aft, aback, astern, abeam,
Lit by the lightning's livid gleam
And all aboard cried, 'Lost!'

[Gallery Chorus]

Lightning hisses through the night
Blinding sight with living light!
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

[Men (shouting above the storm)]

Spare us! Save us! Saviour!
Man the pumps! Axes! Ah!

[Gallery Chorus]

Winds and tempests howl their cry
Of battle through the raging sky! Ah!

[Men]

Lifeboats! Lower away!

[Gallery Chorus]

Waves repeat their angry roar,
Fall and spring again once more! Ah!

[Men]

Let her run before the wind! Shorten sail!
Reef her! Heave her to!

[Gallery Chorus]

Thunder rends the sky asunder
With its savage shout of wonder! Ah! Ah!

[Men]

Pray to God. Kneel and pray!

[Gallery Chorus]

Lightning, Thunder, Tempest, Ocean
Praise their God with voice and motion!

[Men]

Nicolas waited patiently
Till they were on their knees:
Then down he knelt in thankfulness
Begging God their ship to bless
And make the storm to cease.

[Nicolas]

O God! We are all weak, sinful, foolish men.
We pray from fear and from necessity—
At death, in sickness or private loss.
Without the prick of fear our conscience
Sleeps, forgetful of Thy grace.
Help us, O God, to see more clearly.
Tame our stubborn hearts.
Teach us to ask for less
And offer more gratitude to Thee.
Pity our simplicity,
For we are truly pitiable in Thy sight.

[Men]

Amen.

[Nicolas]

The winds and waves lay down to rest,
The sky was clear and calm.
The ship sailed onward without harm
And all creation sang a psalm
Of loving thankfulness.
Beneath the stars the sailors slept
Exhausted by their fear, while I
Knelt down for love of God on high
And saw his angels in the sky
Smile down at me—and wept.

**5. Nicolas comes to Myra
and is chosen Bishop**

[Chorus]

Come, Stranger sent from God!
Come, man of God!
Stand foremost in our church,
And serve this diocese as Bishop Nicolas,
Our shield, our strength, our peace!

[Nicolas]

I, Nicolas, Bishop of Myra and its diocese,
Shall with the unfailing grace of God
Defend his faithful servants,
Comfort the widow and fatherless,
And fulfill his will for this most
blessed Church.

[All]

Amen!

[Gallery Chorus]

Place the mitre on your head to show
your mastery of men! Amen!
Take the golden robe that covers you with
Christ's authority! Amen!
Wear the fine dalmatic woven with the
cross of faith! Amen!
Bear the crozier as a staff and comfort to
your flock! Amen!
Set the ring upon your hand in sacramental
sign of wedlock with thy God! Amen!

Serve the faith and spurn his enemies!

[All voices and the audience as
congregation—see music]

6. Nicolas from Prison

[Nicolas]

Persecution sprang upon our church
And stilled its voice.
Eight barren years it stifled under
Roman rule:
And I lay bound,
Condemned to celebrate my lonely
sacrament with prison bread
While wolves ran loose among my flock.
O man!

The world is set for you as for a king!
Paradise is yours in loveliness.
The stars shine down for you,
For you the angels sing,
Yet you prefer your wilderness.
You hug the rack of self,
Embrace the lash of sin,
Pour your treasures out to bribe distress.
You build your temples fair without and
foul within:
You cultivate your wilderness.
Yet Christ is yours. Yours!
For you he lived and died.
God in mercy gave his Son

1. All peo - ple that on earth do dwell, Sing
2. O en - ter then His gates with praise, Ap -
3. For why? the Lord our God is good: His

to the Lord with cheer - ful voice! Him serve with fear, His
proach with joy His courts un - to, Praise, laud and bless His
mer - cy is for e - ver sure; His truth at all times

praise forth - tell, Come ye be - fore Him and re - joice.
name al - ways, For it is seem - ly so to do.
firm - ly stood, And shall from age - to age en - dure.

3.
A - - - - - men.

To bless you all, to bring you life—
And Him you crucified
To desecrate your wilderness.
Turn, turn, turn away from sin! Ah!
Bow down your hard and stubborn hearts!
Confess yourselves to Him in penitence,
And humbly vow your lives to Him,
to holiness.

7. Nicolas and the Pickled Boys

[*Travellers*]

Famine tracks us down the lanes,
Hunger holds our horses' reins,
Winter heaps the roads with snow
O we have far to go!
Starving beggars howl their cry,
Snarl to see us spurring by.
Times are bad and travel slow
O we have far to go!

[*Mothers*]

We mourn our boys, our missing ones!
We sorrow for three little ones!
Timothy, Mark and John are gone!
Are gone! Are gone!

[*Travellers*]

Landlord, take this piece of gold!
Bring us food before the cold
Makes our pangs of hunger grow!
O we have far to go!

[*Mothers*]

Day by day we seek to find
Some trace of them—but oh! Unkind!
Timothy, Mark and John are gone!
Are gone! Are gone!

[*Travellers*]

Let us share this dish of meat.
Come, my friends, sit down and eat!
Join us, Bishop, for we know
That you have far to go!

[*Mothers*]

Mary meek and Mother mild
Who lost thy Jesus as a child
Our Timothy, Mark and John are gone!
Are gone! Are gone!

[*Travellers*]

Come, your Grace, don't eat so slow!
Take some meat...

[*Nicolas*]

O do not taste! O do not feed on sin!
But haste to save three souls in need!
The mothers' cry is sad and weak,
Within these walls they lie
Whom mothers sadly seek.
Timothy, Mark and John
Put your fleshly garments on!
Come from dark oblivion!... Come!

[*Travellers*]

See! Three boys spring back to life
Who, slaughtered by the butcher's knife
Lay salted down!
And entering, hand in hand they stand
and sing
Alleluia to their King!

[*The Pickled Boys*]

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

[*All*]

ALLELUIA!

8. His Piety and Marvelous Works

[*Chorus*]

For forty years our Nicolas,
Our prince of men, our shepherd
And our gentle guide, walked by our side.
We turned to him at birth and death,
In time of famine and distress,
In all our grief to bring relief.
He led us from the valleys
To the pleasant hills of grace.
He fought to fold us in from mortal sin.
O! He was prodigal of love!
A spendthrift in devotion to us all—
And blessed as he caressed.
We keep his memory alive
In legends that our children
And their children's children treasure still.
A captive at the heathen court
Wept sorely all alone.
'O Nicolas is here, my son!
And he will bring you home!'
'Fill, fill my sack with corn!' he said:
'We die from lack of food!'
And from that single sack he fed
A hungry multitude.
Three daughters of a nobleman
Were doomed to shameful sin,
Till our good Bishop ransomed them
By throwing purses in.

The gates were barred, the black flag flew,
 Three men knelt by the block.
 But Nicolas burst in like flame
 And stayed the axe's shock.
 'O help us, good Nicolas!
 Our ship is full of foam!'
 He walked across the waves to them
 And led them safely home.
 He sat among the bishops
 Who were summoned to Nicaea:
 Then rising with the wrath of God
 Boxed Arius's ear!
 He threatened Constantine the Great
 With bell and book and ban:
 Till Constantine confessed his sins
 Like any common man.
 Let the legends that we tell
 Praise him, with our prayers as well.
 We keep his memory alive
 In legends that our children
 And their children's children treasure still.

9. The Death of Nicolas

[*Nicolas*]

DEATH, I hear thy summons and I come
 In haste, for my short life is done;
 And oh! my soul is faint with love
 For Him who waits for me above.

LORD, I come to life, to final birth.
 I leave the misery of earth
 For light, by Thy eternal grace,
 Where I shall greet Thee face to face.

CHRIST, receive my soul with tenderness,
 For in my last of life I bless
 Thy name who lived and died for me,
 And dying, yield my soul to Thee.

[*Chorus*]

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant
 Depart in peace, according to Thy word.
 For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation
 Which Thou hast prepared
 Before the face of all people
 To be a light to lighten the Gentiles
 And to be the glory of Thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father,
 And to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!
 As it was in the beginning,
 is now, and ever shall be: world without end.
 Amen.

[*All voices and the audience as
 congregation—see music*]

1. God moves in a my - ste - rious
 2. Deep in un - fa - tho - ma - ble
 3. Ye fear - ful saints, fresh cou - rage

way mines His won - ders to per - form;
 take, The Of ne - ver skill
 dread

He plants His foot - steps in the sea, And
 He trea - sures up His bright de - signs, And
 Are big with mer - cy, and shall break In

rides u - pon the storm.
 works His so - vereign will.
 bless - ings on your head. A - - men!

MEET THE ARTISTS



Tenor **Patrick Conklin** hails from Collins, Ohio, where he spent his early years singing with the Oberlin Choristers. While there he had many opportunities to sing with groups such as the Cleveland Opera and Apollo's Fire Baroque Orchestra. Patrick received his bachelor's degree from Bowling Green (Ohio) State University. During his time there he performed several leading roles, such as Hyllus in Handel's *Hercules*, Basilio in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Camille, Count de Rosillion in Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow*. Patrick is now pursuing his master's degree at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, where he has performed the roles of Scaramuccio in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Count Almaviva in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. This past summer Patrick sang the role of Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at Opera Steamboat's young artist program in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.



Gallery Chorus conductor **Nicholas Sienkiewicz** (he/him/his) is a conductor and researcher currently based in Bloomington. Nicholas has appeared on various media platforms including the *Choralosophy* podcast, WMUK, and WFIU radio. He has been invited to present at multiple conferences, including THEMPosium, the College Music Society, European Association for Music in Schools, International Symposium of Performance Science, and the Western Region of the American Choral Director's Association (ACDA). As a writer, Nicholas has published two articles in the ACDA Choral Journal. Most recently, he held the position of Head of Voice at the French Woods Festival for the Performing Arts. With the Bloomington Chamber Singers, Nicholas played the role of Matthew in Craig Hella Johnson's *Considering Matthew Shepard*. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and a Bachelor of Musical Arts degree from Western Michigan University. He is currently pursuing his Master of Music in Choral Conducting at Indiana University Bloomington.



Cohen J. Powell, age 8, is a second grader at St. Charles Catholic School. Cohen is a Cub Scout and loves being outdoors and helping with the garden. He enjoys learning about history and has quite the rock collection! He is hoping that St. Nicholas will bring him a guinea pig for Christmas this year. Cohen would like to thank BCS, Dr. Sousa, and his grandmother Kathy Powell for the opportunity to be a part of this show.



Gerald Sousa (Music Director) has held the position of BCS Artistic Director since 1989. Dr. Sousa received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and his doctorate in Choral Conducting, summa cum laude, from Indiana University. He has held positions at the University of New Orleans, Dartmouth College, and the University of North Carolina, and has performed professionally at the Aspen Summer Music Festival. Dr. Sousa is currently Director of Music at St.

Mark's United Methodist Church in Bloomington, and is active as an arts advocate and technology consultant. He has served on the boards of local arts organizations, including the former Bloomington Area Arts Council, which he led as President for a number of years.



Brian Samarzea (Assistant Music Director) holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Indiana University, where he studied voice with Carlos Montané, Carol Smith, and Mary Ann Hart and conducting with Michael Schwartzkopf. He was the founder and Artistic Director of Bloomington Music Works, a non-professional theater company that specialized in musical theater, opera, and operetta. Brian has produced dozens of musicals such as *Godspell*, *Into The Woods*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *A Little Night Music*, and many others. He is equally comfortable on

stage and behind the podium and has worked with dozens of theatrical companies across the Midwest. Brian is thrilled to be working with Bloomington Chamber Singers and would like to thank his husband, Rick Armstrong, his daughter Madeline Samarzea, and their dog Sunny for all their love and support.



Claire Tafoya (Assistant to the Director) received a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music in Performance (horn) from Indiana University. She played professionally in the Nashville Symphony Orchestra for 4 years. Since 2011, Tafoya has served as Administrative Assistant for the IU Jacobs School of Music Department of Bands, and enjoys assisting with BCS operations.

PROGRAM NOTES

This afternoon's concert presents two of Benjamin Britten's most beloved choral masterpieces, both befitting harbingers of the Advent season. Composed only seven years apart, they share a lovely sense of wonder and naïveté, and capture the magic and centuries-old traditions of the Christmas season.

A Ceremony of Carols was inspired by Britten's discovery of "The English Galaxy of Shorter Poems" and was apparently composed in part while returning to Britain from the United States. The carols are largely the product of 15th and 16th century writers, most of whom are anonymous. They retain their unique flavor by Britten's extensive use of old [Middle] English language. The work was first sung by the Morriston Boys' Choir, conducted by Britten, at the Wigmore Hall in London in December 1943. Framed by plainsong (the Hodie chant is proper to Vespers on Christmas Eve), and making use of medieval and 16th century poetry, the *Ceremony* is, in a sense, a forerunner of the church parables, those richly dramatic, biblically derived works of Britten's later maturity (*St. Nicolas* is a prime example) that are themselves parodies of medieval morality plays. The plainsong tune asserts its key role in the haunting harp Interlude at the *Ceremony's* mid-point. This sublime movement lays out the Hodie tune in the uppermost voice, swathed in an impressionistic, pointillistic atmosphere that is worlds away from its ancient roots, but apt and urgent and poignant in context.

For the general public, Britten (1913–1976) is best known as a composer of operas, and operas with often disturbing libretti. Such masterworks as *Peter Grimes* and *The Turn of the Screw*, and most tellingly, his last opera, *Death in Venice*, deal with the darker side of human nature. Yet the testimony of his friends was that a part of him never grew up, and he always looked back with longing at the joys of childhood. One of his favorite recreations after a day of composing was to play children's games in the evening. *Saint Nicolas* is only one of twelve opus numbers that either involve children as participants, or are composed for their enjoyment.

St. Nicholas, whose feast day is celebrated December 6, is the patron saint of sailors, scholars, and children, and is also the patron saint of Russia, Greece, Sicily, and Lorraine. Most information about his actual life is based on oral tradition, but historians agree that he was born to a wealthy family in Patara in Lycia near the end of the third century. He was reported to have worked miracles even as a child, fasting and giving away his wealth to the poor. Nicholas became a model pastor, noted for his charity, and was appointed Bishop of Myra in the early fourth century.

Saint Nicolas was written for performance at the Centenary Celebrations of Lancing College, Sussex. Inasmuch as St. Nicolas was the patron saint of children (and co-patron of Lancing College), one of the commissioners suggested "a hymn to Saint Nicolas." Basil Handford, a master at Lancing, writes:

Continued on page 16

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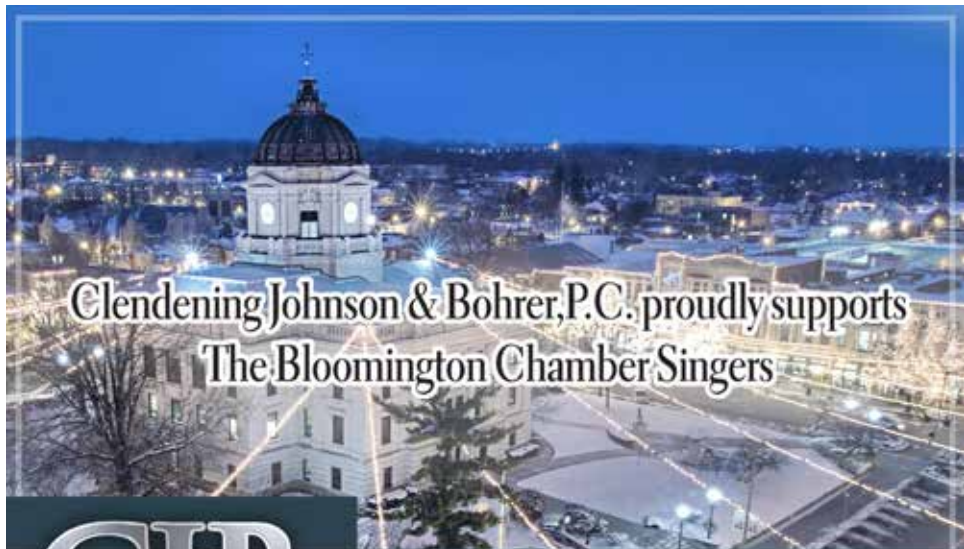
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Program Notes (continued)

“Tell me about Saint Nicolas,” said Ben. So I told him the legends. Almost immediately he saw it as a series of episodes. “It will have to be a cantata, I think.”

Eric Crozier [who had also written many of Britten’s opera libretti] was engaged to write the text, and Britten gave him Haydn’s *Creation* as a model. The composition sketch was written in three weeks, and Britten said he “was enjoying it hugely.” This was his first major work intended for performance by amateurs, and he relished the challenge of making a profound statement with simplicity of means. Britten writes:

I want to write for people... . There is something very fresh and unrestrained in the quality of the music produced by amateurs. What annoys me more is the ineptitude of some professionals who don’t know their stuff. I have no patience with that.

It is this quality of youthful playfulness contrasted with a profound seriousness that makes *Saint Nicolas* a unique work. The seriousness is primarily allotted to the tenor soloist, and Nicolas’ fervor, humanity, and vision are passionately portrayed in this central character. He grieves for the corruption of man (“O man! ... You hug the rack of self, embrace the lash of sin,”), and accepts his death with hope (“Lord, I come to life, to final birth”). The legends spring from his ardent pastoring (“O! he was the prodigal of love! a spendthrift in devotion to us all”). Britten achieves operatic clarity of characterization in these few arias, which were tailored to the dramatic gifts of Peter Pears. This Nicolas is not a plaster saint or Christmas ornament, but a vibrant, vulnerable human being, whose life and works earned him the honors he received.

Britten had great fun with the choruses. Nicolas’ life story begins with a waltz, which includes a bath scene with the orchestral equivalent of water running out of the tub. Pianos and percussion provide marvelous waves in the storm scene. High voices strike lightning, and choir men are the ship’s terrified crew.

A new and important element in *Saint Nicolas* was the inclusion of the congregation in the musical action. These hymn tunes were familiar to a generation educated in English public schools, where chapel and hymn singing were daily events. It drew them back to their own childhood, [and] at the same time demanded a level of participation beyond passive listening. This remarkable layering of musical elements ... provides no small part of the pleasure we have in listening to this work. And the humility of a great composer writing serious music within the capabilities of ordinary people explains the continuing favor this music finds half a century after its composition.

--By Robert Scandrett, with permission from the St. Nicholas Center, www.stnicholascenter.org



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Welcome to an Afternoon of Britten!

On behalf of the BCS Board, I am delighted to welcome you to an afternoon of works by Benjamin Britten. *A Ceremony of Carols*, Op. 28, is one of Britten's best-known and most performed works. His dramatic oratorio *Saint Nicolas*, Op. 42, highlights compelling moments in the legendary life of Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, whose reputation for secret gift-giving inspired the legend of Santa Claus. Both provide a compelling musical start to the holiday season.

We could not continue to present performances without the generous support of so many. **Thank you for your support of Bloomington Chamber Singers.** We also thank the many individuals and businesses listed in the program for their support of our work, helping us to bring the gift of choral music to Bloomington and beyond.

Many thanks to the **Indiana Arts Commission, National Endowment for the Arts, Arts Midwest, Brown County Community Foundation, Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation, and Psi Iota Xi (Zeta Chapter)** for their support of BCS.

St. Mark's United Methodist Church provides us with our weekly rehearsal space and meeting room, the technology for this afternoon's livestream, and much more. Many thanks to the church and its pastors Jimmy Moore and Mary Beth Morgan.

Continued on page 20



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Welcome (continued)

Special thanks go as well to **Nick Sienkiewicz** for preparing the gallery chorus for today's performance.

I continue to be grateful for and amazed by **all the BCS choir members**, who helped make this production—and all our productions—possible by giving of time, talents and financial resources. Thanks to all of you for your passion and dedication.

Lastly, thank you to our **Musical Director, Gerry Sousa**. Your passion for BCS and for the music inspires us.

We invite you to join us for the rest of our 2021–22 season: our annual spring Messiah Sing-Along on April 10 and our Spring Concert on April 23, which will feature works by Vaughan Williams, Brahms and Mozart.

Thank you again for joining us and sharing your love of choral music. May today's performance inspire you with the power of giving to others in our community.

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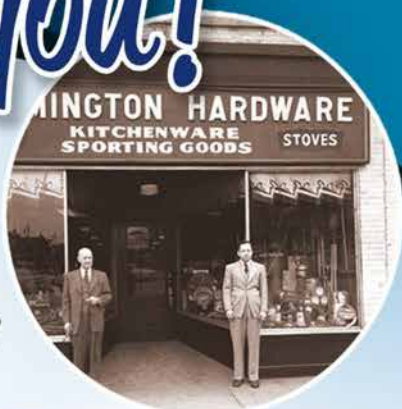
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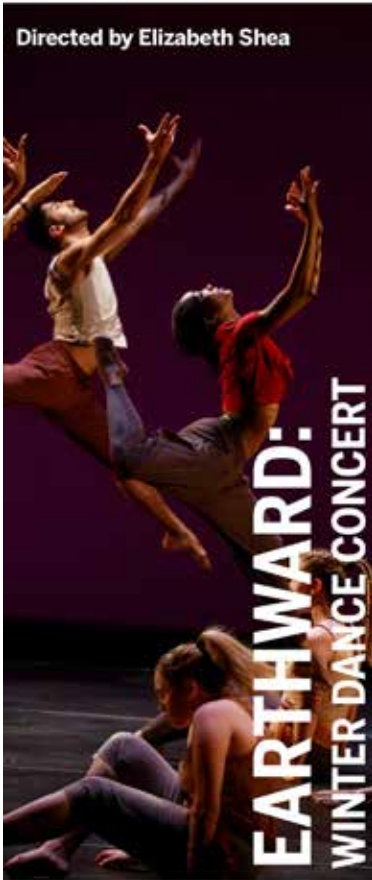
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