

DONA
NOBIS
PACEM



Southwestern Singers Christmas Vespers

Evergreen Presbyterian Church

December 6, 1970. 8 p.m.

DONA NOBIS PACEM

Composer: Ralph Vaughn Williams

Conductor: Tony Lee Garner '65

Soloists:

Mary Anna Williamson '71

James Dick '71

G. Edward Sharp '71

I

*Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi
Dona nobis pacem.*

II

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows—through the doors—burst like a ruthless force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying;
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field, or gathering in his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;
Are beds prepared for the sleepers at night in the houses? No sleepers must sleep
in those beds,
No bargainers' bargains by day—would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,
So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

Walt Whitman.

III
RECONCILIATION

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly, softly, wash again and ever
again this soiled world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

Walt Whitman.

IV
DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

The last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finished Sabbath,
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,
Up from the east the silvery round moon,
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,
Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,
And I hear the sound of coming full-keyed bugles,
All the channels of the city streets they're flooding
As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,
And the small drums steady whirring,
And every blow of the great convulsive drums
Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,
In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,
Two veterans, son and father, dropped together,
And the double grave awaits them.

Now nearer blow the bugles,
And the drums strike more convulsive,
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumined,
'Tis some mother's large transparent face,
In heaven brighter growing.

O strong dead-march you please me!
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

Walt Whitman.

V

The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one as of old . . . to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on.

John Bright.

Dona nobis pacem.

We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land . . . and those that dwell therein. . . .

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. . . .

Is there no balm in Gilead?; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Jeremiah VIII. 15-22.

'O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong.'

Daniel X. 19.

'The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former . . . and in this place will I give peace.'

Haggai II. 9.

VI

'Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

And none shall make them afraid, neither shall the sword go through their land.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them.

Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled; and let them hear, and say, it is the truth.

And it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues.

And they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and they shall declare my glory among the nations.

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, so shall your seed and your name remain for ever.'

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.

(Adapted from Micah iv. 3, Leviticus xxvi. 6, Psalms lxxxv. 10, and cxviii. 19, Isaiah xliii. 9, and lxvi. 18-22, and Luke ii. 14.)

