

The Sacred in Opera **October 2008**

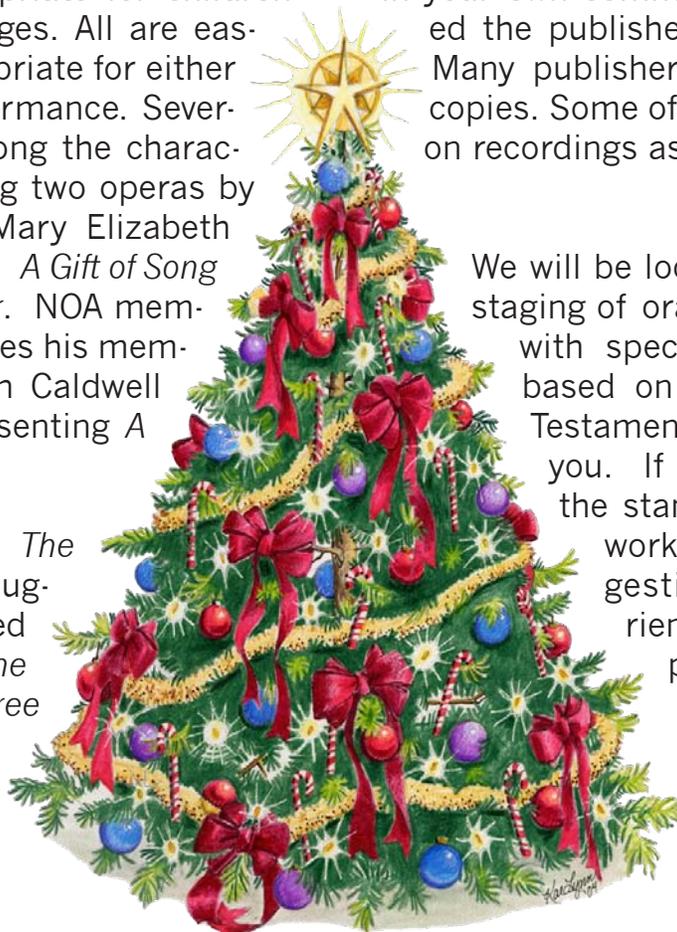
IN THIS ISSUE...
Ruth Dobson

We continue in our October issue with a look at four more one-act Christmas chamber operas appropriate for children and audiences of all ages. All are easily produced and appropriate for either theatre or church performance. Several include children among the characters. We are highlighting two operas by American composer Mary Elizabeth Caldwell (1909 - 2003), *A Gift of Song* and *The Night of the Star*. NOA member Carl Gerbrandt shares his memories of Mary Elizabeth Caldwell and his experience presenting *A Gift of Song* with us.

The composer of *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Douglas Moore, is represented with the delightful *The Greenfield Christmas Tree* as well as British composer Frank Bridge with *The Christmas Rose*.

We hope you will look into these beautiful operas as possibilities for presentation in your own communities. We have included the publisher's contact information. Many publishers will send out perusal copies. Some of the operas are available on recordings as well.

We will be looking at the topic of the staging of oratorios in our next issue, with special emphasis on works based on the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). We want to hear from you. If you have staged any of the standard oratorios or other works, please send your suggestions/information/experiences to us at dobsonr@pdx.edu.



Ruth Dobson
- Chair -
The Sacred in Opera

Sacred in Opera Spotlight

- Two Operas by Mary Elizabeth Caldwell -
A Gift of Song & The Night of the Star

Information from *Sacred Music Drama: The Producer's Guide*, Second Edition, by Carl Gerbrandt, <http://www.AuthorHouse.com>

A GIFT OF SONG

Music by Mary Elizabeth Caldwell (1909-2003)

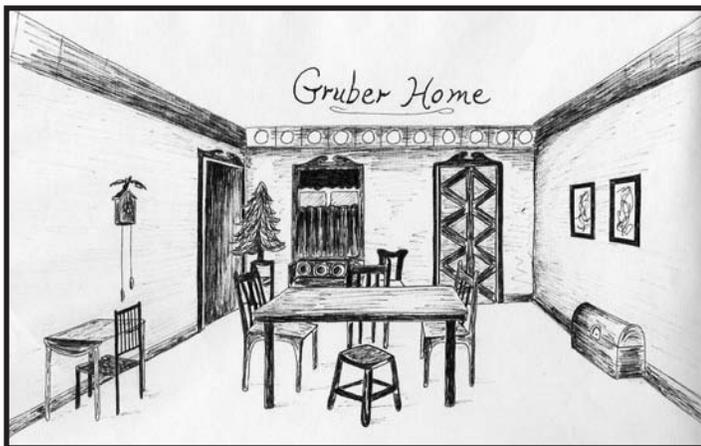
Description:

A Christmas Opera with libretto in English by the composer, based on facts surrounding the writing and discovery of the tune *Silent Night*, and the family of its composer, Franz Gruber. Premiered by the Pasadena Youth Music Council, Pasadena, California, December 23, 1961.

One Act: 70 minutes

Three Scenes with two Interludes:

Scene I: Christmas time, 1853 in the living room of the Gruber home, Hallein, Austria



A sketch of a 1983 production's set design for Scene I

Interlude: Outside the Gruber home

Scene II: A year later, the choir rehearsal room of St. Peter's monastery, Salzburg

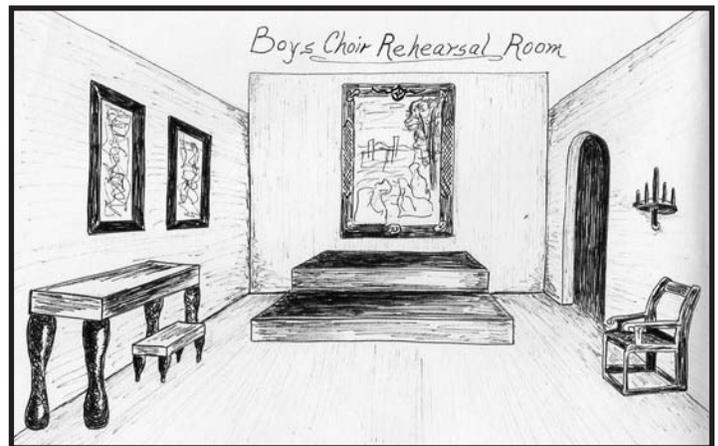
Interlude: Same as first interlude

Scene III: Same as scene I, Christmas, 1854

Musical & Dramatic Characteristics:

Traditional harmony with twentieth century harmonic idioms scattered throughout. Vocal lines are lyric. Melodically conceived. Through-composed with some arias and accompanied recitatives. Considerable comedy. Appealing to all ages, K-adults.

Music is continuous which necessitates quick scene changes. In the proper setting, the singing of the finale can include the choirboys and the audience. Can be effectively performed in a theatre or church with a large stage.



A sketch of a 1983 production's set design for Scene II

Characters:

Karl Franz, soprano: 12-year old son of Franz Gruber, the composer. A small youthful girl with mature, yet young-sounding voice or a boy soprano who has a high upper range.

Annalisa, soprano: Karl's older sister, around 18 years old

Papa Franz Gruber, baritone: mid-sixties

Chormeister Wilelm, tenor: youthful appearance

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A Gift of Song

Continued from Page 2

Characters (cont.):

Chormeister Herr Doctor Geheimrat Professor Von Smallplatz, bass-baritone: Ambassador from the King of Prussia, comic character

Mama Gruber, mezzo-soprano

Rudi, soprano: a choirboy, could be sung by a mature boy soprano

Page, speaking role

Chorus:

SSA – Represents the Salzburg Boy's Choir. Boys preferable but mixed group can work provided they look and sound like a boy's choir, ages 8-16.

Orchestration:

Flute (piccolo), oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, and strings. On stage, a period spinet which may be played from the pit.

Synopsis:

Karl Franz, assisted grudgingly by his sister Annalisa, are packing Karl's bags in preparation for his year of study at the Salzburg school for choirboys. Having finished packing, Papa and Mama Gruber say their last farewell by asking Karl to sing "Papa's little song" for them. They join together as they always do at Christmas, in singing a moving setting of *Silent Night*.



Scene I: Karl and Annalisa trying to outsing each other.

Scene II opens to a noisy choir room, filled with choirboys playing games, fighting, etc. Chormeister Wilhelm enters, regains order, and announces that today they will have a guest from the King of Prussia. A Page enters and announces the entrance of Smallplatz. He of

course requests that they sing for him, which they do. Secretly, he tells Wilhelm that the King has asked him to travel the land in search of the composer of a particular song which the King wants included in the national hymnal. Smallplatz hands Wilhelm a manuscript containing the song *Silent Night*, which Wilhelm has never heard. The boys tease Smallplatz, whom they consider to be an old obnoxious simpleton.



Scene II: The choirboys rehearsing.

Finally, the pranks and teasing go too far. Karl Franz is targeted as the leader of the pranks and is punished by not being allowed to go home for Christmas. In his pouting and crying, he inadvertently begins to hum his Papa's song, which Wilhelm overhears. Wilhelm asks Karl where he learned that song, and Karl explains that his Papa wrote it.

Wilhelm immediately cancels the punishment and accompanies Karl to his home to meet Papa Gruber. Christmas is being celebrated in the Gruber home. Karl enters with Wilhelm and tells Papa the story. Papa, after searching for his manuscript, is unable to find it. Karl suggests that he write it down while they all sing it. In a grand finale, *Silent Night* is sung by all.

Material:

Boosey & Hawkes
35 E. 21st St.
New York, NY 10010
212-358-5300
<http://www.boosey.com>

THE NIGHT OF THE STAR Music by Mary Elizabeth Caldwell (1909-2003)

Description:

A Christmas Opera with libretto in English by the composer. The plot focuses on the events surrounding the announcement of the birth of the Christ Child by the heavenly angels to the shepherds. Commissioned by the Junior League of Pasadena and premiered on December 5, 1965 in the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, Pasadena, California.

One Act: 60 minutes

Setting: During the time of Christ's birth, on a rocky field outside Bethlehem.

Musical and Dramatic Characteristics:

Romantic harmonic style with considerable chromaticism and some dissonance. Melodic lines are vocally conceived by dissonance abounds in the lengthy middle duet section between Jonathan and Little Angel. Through-composed with arias for Jonathan, Little Angel, and Benjamin. Considerable comedy. Appealing to all ages, K-adult. Gabriel and angels' chorus must sound ethereal, appearing in the distant sky; therefore, the use of scrim and scaffolding may be necessary. Also, an important working prop is Jonathan's little lamb, which must be believable whether it is real or a toy. Most effectively staged in a theatre, but conceivable in a house of worship with a large stage area.

Characters:

Jonathan, soprano or boy soprano: a young shepherd boy

Little Angel, soprano: same age as Jonathan

Benjamin, tenor: Jonathan's older brother in his early twenties, a shepherd

Jacob, baritone: a shepherd

Nathan, bass-baritone: the oldest shepherd

Roman Soldier, baritone: big and burly

Slave Girl, mezzo-soprano

Two slave children, boy and girl, mute

The Angel Gabriel, speaking role

Chorus:

SSAA – an invisible angel chorus

Orchestration:

Full – flute (piccolo), 2 oboes (Eng horn), 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, timpani, percussion, harp, cel, strings; Reduced – piano, organ, harp, cello, timpani, percussion (trumpet and flute are mandatory for the story line)

Synopsis:

Three shepherds along with their younger brother Jonathan slumber around a fire, tending their sleeping sheep. Jonathan is awakened by the sound of music and wanders off in search of its source. Suddenly, an angelic choir is heard and Gabriel announces the birth of the Christ Child to the three shepherds. The three eagerly prepare for their visit to the Child and leave the sheep in the care of heart-broken Jonathan. As Jonathan guards the sheep, a little angel falls out of the sky and stumbles into Jonathan's camp. His wing is broken from a collision with another angel while playing hide and seek. Jonathan agrees to fix Little Angel's wing. Little Angel is intrigued by Jonathan's earthly flute while Jonathan so badly wants to hear the angels sing. The two barter, exchange gifts and Little Angel hurries off, leaving his halo behind, to catch up with the other angels at the stable.

No sooner has Little Angel departed than a slave girl and two slave children, in chains, run onto stage. Jonathan frees them and just as a Roman Soldier appears, finds a hiding place for them. The Soldier threatens to kill Jonathan if he does not reveal their hiding place. The Little Angel reappears in the sky and frightens the Soldier away. The older shepherds return and relate to Jonathan the wondrous story of the Christ Child's birth, making note that among the gifts they saw was a flute just like his. As dawn approaches, heavenly choirs fill the skies, the heavens glow revealing the figure of Little Angel waving to Jonathan. Jonathan cries out, "O thank you, angel!" and waves back to him as the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* rises to a climax.

Materials:

Theodore Presser
588 N. Gulph Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406
610-592-1222
presser@presser.com

NOTES ABOUT THE COMPOSER OF *A GIFT OF SONG* AND *THE NIGHT OF THE STAR*

Mary Elizabeth Caldwell (1909 - 2003), distinguished American composer, was educated at UC Berkeley, with further study at the Munich Conservatory and the Juilliard School. A church organist for over fifty years, many of her hundreds of published works were written for various choirs ranging from youth to adult, with voicings ranging from unison to complex divisi SATB. She composed numerous cantatas for young voices and was one of the first composers to explore the rich folk carol tradition. Several such arrangements were chosen by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir for their earliest recordings in the late fifties and are still favorites today. In the sixties her interests expanded to include opera and liturgical drama. She was commissioned by the Pasadena Junior League to write three operas for children to be presented by the Pasadena Symphony all of which delighted thousands of children. The second of the these, *A Gift of Song*, the story of Franz Grüber's composing of Silent Night, has been presented in numerous performances world wide from Australia to Europe and often regarded the equal of *Amahl*. In addition, she has written collections for solo voice and organ. Her works have been the subject of both a Masters and Doctoral dissertation and she has been listed in *Who's Who of American Women* since 1967.



A Viable Alternative for Christmas . . . A Must!

Carl Gerbrandt

"If you are looking for an ideal alternative to *Amahl*, I have one for you!" So said Mary Elizabeth Caldwell to me years ago as we conversed about sacred operas for the Christmas season. She shared with me one of her recent operas which had already received numerous performances in the U.S. as well as in England, Wales, and Australia. Of course she was speaking of *A Gift of Song*. Intrigued with her description of this opera, I felt compelled to examine the work further. After all, with an autographed copy of the vocal score handed to me by the composer, how could I refuse!

Comparing the two works is not the point, of course, though the two have numerous similarities, from the use of children's voices to the accessibility of a chamber cast and orchestration, from the emotional "tugs" of children's fantasies to that of family concerns, from humorous moments to tearful moments that dig deeply into the soul.

A Gift of Song combines fact with fiction, essentially telling the story of the writing and discovery of Franz Grüber's well-know *Silent Night* (*Stille Nacht*). Thrown into the plot is a delightful and moving story of the Grüber family. Feisty would be an appropriate description of Karl Franz and Annalisa's relationship.

The two children of Franz (Papa) and Mama Grüber are the central focus of the opera, both sung by either well-trained children's voices or youthful adult voices. Both roles contain high Cs, and must therefore be cast with care.

Scene 1 takes place in the Grüber home as Karl Franz prepares to leave for a year of study at the Salzburg school for choirboys. It is a touching scene as emotional farewells are voiced. The final "good-bye" is said with the family of four singing "Papa's little song" (*Silent Night*), beautifully orchestrated with descants sung and played alternately by Karl Franz and a solo violin.

Scene 2 opens to a very noisy choir room, filled with boys fighting, playing games, and well, simply being boys without supervision! I asked Mary Elizabeth where she found all the humorous "one-liners" for her libretto. She simply replied, "When you raise four boys in your own home, you learn about humor!"

The scene goes on to depict a typical choir rehearsal, with the boys singing two of Mary Elizabeth's best compositions for SSA. If you are at all familiar with her works for children's voices, you will appreciate the delightful presence of these pieces in this op-

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era. A most humorous moment occurs in this scene when Chormeister Herr Doctor Geheimrat Professor Von Smallplatz, Ambassador from the King of Prussia, a buffo-basso, enters in search of the composer's name of a particular tune the King wants included in the national hymnbook. Smallplatz hands over a manuscript copy of the tune *Silent Night*. Of course, Karl Franz immediately recognizes the tune as that of his father's, and plans are made for a quick trip to the Grüber home. Meanwhile, the choir boys tease Smallplatz relentlessly, considering him to be an old obnoxious simpleton.

Scene 3 takes place again in the Grüber home, where Papa is asked to produce his manuscript which, after searching the house, he is unable to find. Karl Franz suggests that he write the tune down again while they all sing it. In a grand finale, *Silent Night* is sung by the cast. I have found it highly effective to bring the choir boys back to mix with the audience during the singing of this finale. I have also used lighted candles carried by the boys during this scene, while the audience joins the cast in singing the final verse of this familiar Carol.

The orchestration consists of a small chamber instrumentation (fl (picc), ob, 2 cl, 2 hrn, trp, timp, perc, hp, pia, strings). For economical situations, I have known of several performances which have been highly successful with the use of only piano, percussion, and harp.

My personal experiences with this operatic gem has been nothing short of rewarding with enthusiastic responses from singers and audiences alike. A letter from a production group stated after their performance of *A Gift of Song*, "O thank you for this! This opera has given us more Christmas spirit than anything has for many years!"

While I was preparing *A Gift of Song* for a tour in which I involved Mary Elizabeth, she was ecstatic not only about the production but stated, "Yes, the Xmas operas are my favorites in spite of the 170 other octavos, cantatas, etc., that I have written." I thought her quote to be quite remarkable considering the popularity of her many children's choir compositions.

Further, I have found this work to be very accessible. Perhaps the biggest hurdle to cross is finding a capable boys choir. I had the privilege of working with the Louisville Boys Choir during one of my productions. They indeed were vocally magnificent and naturally filled the role of "mischievous" boys! However, I have also successfully use mixed boys and girls voices to fill this role.

Mary Elizabeth has included in her score (Boosey and Hawkes) helpful production notes which include a list of props, furnishings, costume suggestions, production photos, and an artist's sketch of one of the sets used in the production of this work.

The set can be as complex or simple as the situation demands. One set I used was built with hinges to swing the outer walls open and closed between the two settings needed for this work, thus creating a set change which took less than a minute to complete.

Mary Elizabeth Caldwell was a true artist in every sense of the word. Her home was filled with memorabilia and always artistically decorated. Visiting her one Christmas gave her the opportunity to show me her 900 plus angels displayed throughout her large Victorian home, a collection reflective of her special love of the Christmas season. She lived her productive life as composer, wife, mother, organist, and choir director to the fullest. Her four sacred operas were all written for local production within her own church in Pasadena. Three of her four operas were published during her lifetime. *Pepito's Golden Flower*, *The Night of the Star*, *A Gift of Song*, and *In the Fullness of Time* are all filled with melody, joy, and many funny as well as thought-provoking moments.

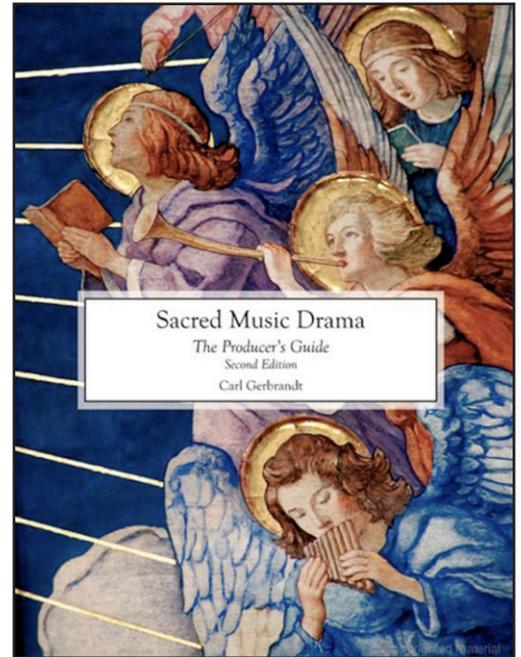
I encourage the production of these works, especially *A Gift of Song*, as I find it highly rewarding as a Christmas work, though in all honesty, I have also produced it at times other than Christmas and found it works well in all situations. Check it out. You'll be glad you did. A review article written several months after touring *A Gift of Song* and culminating our tour with a production for a national music conference, summarized for me the effect of this wonderful work: "The entire production was magnificent . . . (we) continued to receive accolades long after the last note of *A Gift of Song* was sung."



NOTES ABOUT CARL GERBRANDT

Dr. Carl Gerbrandt is Professor Emeritus of Voice and Director of Opera Theatre at the University of Northern Colorado. While he made his mark in the field of operatic performance, Dr. Gerbrandt has also presented many recitals nationwide, masterclasses, and choral workshops. Of his over seventy opera and oratorio roles, four have been American premieres. He has appeared as bass soloist in two professional filmings of Handel's *Messiah*. Dr. Gerbrandt made his professional directing debut at Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center in Mozart's *The Abduction From the Seraglio*. Additionally, his staged production of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was filmed by PBS-TV and broadcast nationwide. He has staged over 40 operas, has served on a distinguished panel of international artists, and has given a presentation on the "Opera/Music Theatre Cross-over Singer" before a national audience. He has also presented operatic productions at three national music conventions.

Prior to his work at UNC, Dr. Gerbrandt was opera director for Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University, Southern Baptist Seminary where he began their Sacred Music Drama Program, and Tabor College. In 1990, Dr. Gerbrandt held a Visiting Scholar position at Cambridge University, England, where he completed his book, *Sacred Music Drama: the Producer's Guide*. This past year, the second edition was published. He has also edited *The Songs of Louis Cheslock*, a collection of the complete songs of the late American composer. In 2004, he was again in Cambridge, this time as a Visiting Fellow researching Zarzuela.



Conductor of the heralded Greeley Chorale from 1987-present, Dr. Gerbrandt directed the auditioned 90-voice choir on five International concert tours and presented 10 world premieres. In Summer, 1996, he became the first guest conductor of the Oxford Academy Orchestra in Oxford, England, leading the orchestra and the Chorale in Mozart's *Requiem* to a near capacity audience in the world renowned Sheldonian Theatre. In 2005, he took the Chorale to Italy. Most noteworthy was a performance before the Pope in Rome, a High Mass in St. Peter's, and a performance of Mozart's *Requiem* with the Mozart Sinfonietta of Rome before a standing room only audience in the Pope's church, Chiesa di St. Ignazio. The Chorale is scheduled to tour Greece, Summer 2009.



Recently, Dr. Gerbrandt has been engaged as a guest opera director and voice clinician. He holds conducting and performance degrees from Tabor College and Wichita State University, and a doctoral degree in Voice Performance from Peabody Conservatory of Music of Johns Hopkins University. Post-doctoral studies in voice and opera were taken at Nordwestdeutsche Musikakademie in Detmold, Germany.

The Greenfield Christmas Tree Music by Douglas Moore (1893-1969)

Description:

A Christmas Entertainment with libretto in English by Arnold Sundgaard. First performance on December 8, 1962 at Bushnell Memorial Auditorium in Hartford, Connecticut.

One Act: 45 minutes

Setting: In a barn on a New England farm in 1873.

Musical & Dramatic Characteristics:

Highly melodic and vocally accessible. Spoken dialogue. Some unaccompanied choral passages. Traditional harmonic textures with twentieth century influences. Through-composed. Folk elements and simplicity are maintained in keeping with the intended child-like story telling process. Costumes and sets should convey the feeling that this is a children's story book come alive before the eyes of the audience. Best performed in an intimate auditorium.

Characters:

John Frothingham, bass-baritone: the guardian Grandfather

His Grandchildren:

Toby, Age 11: speaking role

Prudence, Age 8: speaking role

Susan, age 6: speaking role

Samuel, the hired man: speaking role

Brita, contralto: Norwegian housekeeper

Reverend Flood: speaking role

Choral Leader, baritone: the narrator

The Donkey, bass

The Cow, alto

The Goat, tenor

The Sheep, soprano

Speaking roles should be equally divided between high and low voices if possible, since they are all asked to sing in the final ensemble numbers.

Chorus: SATB neighbors and friends

Dance:

Some simple folk dancing during the decoration of the Christmas Tree

Orchestration:

2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, percussion, harp, and strings.

Synopsis:

Due to the stern Puritan influence which frowned on all worldly show of decoration, most New England states did not introduce Christmas trees into the season until the middle 1880's. The action begins with the sound of neighbors caroling from outside the walls of the barn. They sing of the birth of the Son of God. The Choral Leader introduces us to John Frothingham admonishing his grandchildren that only a savage would worship a tree; Christmas trees are a foolish, heathen custom. The four grandchildren are terribly disappointed in that their father and mother, who have died since last Christmas, always decorated a tree for Christmas. But Grandfather will not have a tree in his house. After all, what would Reverend Flood say if he did! Samuel and Brita are saddened by the disappointment of the children but seem unable to sway John. John leaves and they all begin piecing together a tree from various items they find in the barn. The church bell strikes twelve midnight and Christmas day is born. Even the animals are excited and sing of the birth of Christ. Suddenly there is a knocking on the door of the barn. Voices outside encourage the children not to be afraid. They open the door and there stands a big brightly decorated Christmas tree brought in by Brita and Samuel. The children are overjoyed. At that moment Grandfather John enters the barn angered at the disobedience of the children, Samuel and Brita. He is about to lose his temper when Reverend Flood steps out from behind the tree and calmly tells John that this is the first Christmas tree in all of Massachusetts and he should be proud it chose his place! Grandfather is finally convinced that the tree poses no threat and joins in the celebration. Throughout the story telling process, the chorus comments on the birth of Christ and His presence here below.

Materials:

G. Schirmer
257 Park Avenue South, 20th Floor
NY, NY 10010
212-254-2100
schirmer@schirmer.com
www.schirmer.com

NOTES ABOUT THE COMPOSER:

Douglas Stuart Moore (1893-1969) was an American composer known primarily for his operas. His masterpiece and most popular opera is *The Ballad of Baby Doe*; premiered in Central City, Colorado on July 7, 1956; later that same year at the New York City Opera with Beverly Sills as Baby Doe in her debut as a leading lady and star; also with Frances Bible and Walter Cassel. Other operas (works) of Moore include: *White Wings*, *The Headless Horseman*, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *Giants of the Earth*, *Wings of the Dove*, *The Greenfield's Christmas Tree* and *Carrie Nation*.

He was born on August 10, 1893 in Cutchogue, L.I., N.Y. and died in nearby Greenport, L.I., N.Y. on July 25, 1969. He came from a well-to-do family and was educated at the prestigious private school of Hotchkiss and at Yale University; majoring in fine arts and music. He went to Paris to study, like Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson and other notable American composers with legendary pedagogue, Nadia Boulanger. He returned to the United States and was offered a position with Columbia University as Chairman of the Music Dept. in 1925 and stayed in that position for 37 years until his retirement in 1962. The Ballad of Baby Doe, along with Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* has entered the standard operatic repertory.

The Christmas Rose

Music by Frank Bridge (1879-1941)

Description:

A Christmas Opera with libretto in English based on a play for children by Margaret Kemp-Welch and Constance Cotterell. Composed between 1919-1929.

One Act: 60 minutes

Scene I: In the hills near Bethlehem

Scene II: On the road to Bethlehem

Scene III: Outside the Bethlehem Inn

Musical and Dramatic Characteristics:

Conventional harmonies with considerable chromaticism. Melodic. Much accompanied recitative. Not difficult. Suitable for either theatre or church performance. Intended to be performed by adults for grades 3-9. A touching and effective dramatization.

Characters:

Miriam, soprano

Reuben, mezzo-soprano

Shepherd I, tenor

Shepherd II, baritone

Shepherd III, bass-baritone

Chorus: SSSAAA – Offstage chorus of women's voices; SATB – a chorus of peasants.

Orchestration: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, timpani, percussion, harp, and strings.

Synopsis:

One night in the hills near Bethlehem, three Shepherds see an unusual heavenly light. They are told of a newborn King in Bethlehem and resolve at once to follow the star there to worship the child of prophecy and offer him their homespun gifts. In the same location, Reuben lies asleep while Miriam sits watching. Miriam, startled by heavenly singing, is told by an angel of the birth of the Messiah. Her wish to see Him is thwarted by the Shepherds who insist that the way is too dangerous. Remembering that the Angel had said good tidings were to all people, she and Reuben resolve to set out at once. On the way to Bethlehem, Miriam and Reuben lose their direction. Weary and lonely, Reuben sinks to the ground and urges Miriam to go on without him. Miriam protests and suddenly hears an invisible chorus of angels and sees a star to guide them. The Shepherds, Miriam, and Reuben arrive at the inn of Bethlehem. The Shepherds leave their gifts and return to their flocks. Fearful that they will not be allowed to see the child because they have no gifts, Miriam and Reuben sadly leave. Suddenly, Reuben sees a green shoot pushing through the snow. Their gift has been given to them: roses in the snow. They enter the stable to a chorus of Alleluias.

Materials:

Galaxy Music Corporation
(E. C. Schirmer)

E. C. Schirmer Music Company
138 Ipswich St.
Boston, MA 02215-3534
617-236-1935
1-800-777-1919

www.escpublishing.com

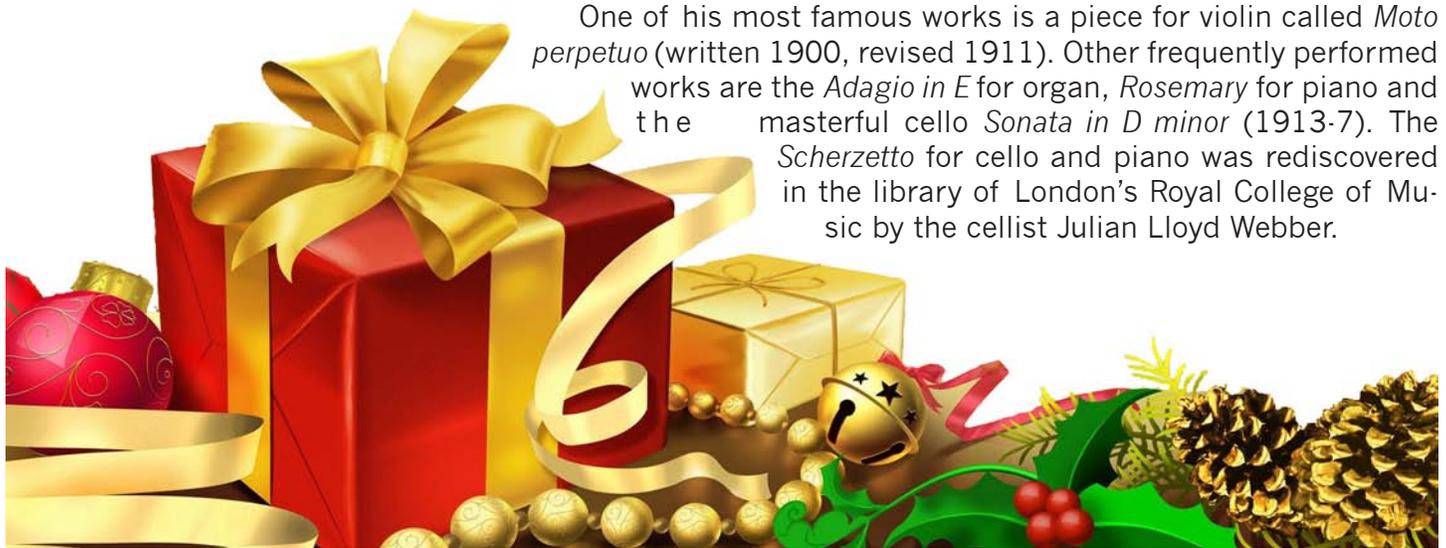
NOTES ABOUT THE COMPOSER:

Frank Bridge was born in Brighton and studied at the Royal College of Music in London from 1899 to 1903 under Charles Villiers Stanford and others. He played the viola in a number of string quartets, most notably the English String Quartet, and conducted, sometimes deputizing for Henry Wood, before devoting himself to composition, receiving the patronage of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. He privately tutored a number of pupils, most famously Benjamin Britten, who later championed his teacher's music and paid homage to him in the *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* (1937), based on a theme from the second of Bridge's *Three Idylls for String Quartet* (1906). Bridge died in Eastbourne.

Among Bridge's works are the orchestral *The Sea* (1911), *Oration* (1930) for cello and orchestra (recorded in 1976 by Julian Lloyd Webber) and the opera *The Christmas Rose* (premiered 1932), but he is perhaps most highly regarded today for his chamber music. His early works are in a late-Romantic idiom, but later pieces such as the third (1926) and fourth (1937) string quartets are harmonically advanced and very distinctive, showing the influence of the Second Viennese School.

His works also show harmonic influences by Maurice Ravel and especially Alexander Scriabin. One of his most characteristic harmonies is the Bridge chord, for instance C minor and D major sounding at the same time, very poignant in *There Is a Willow Grows Aslant a Brook* and the piano sonata (1922-5). He wrote this work to the memory of Ernest Farrar.

One of his most famous works is a piece for violin called *Moto perpetuo* (written 1900, revised 1911). Other frequently performed works are the *Adagio in E* for organ, *Rosemary* for piano and the masterful cello *Sonata in D minor* (1913-7). The *Scherzetto* for cello and piano was rediscovered in the library of London's Royal College of Music by the cellist Julian Lloyd Webber.



The Sacred in Opera

Committee Members:

Ruth Dobson (Chair)

Carl Gerbrandt

Michael Penny

Curtis Rayam

Kathleen Roland-Silverstein

Linda Snyder

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