

# THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT PAUL

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

## CHOIR & ORGAN RECITAL

SISTER SERVANTS OF THE ETERNAL WORD

DECEMBER 6, 2020 4:30PM



PANIS ANGELICUS	CLAUDIO CASCIOLINI (1670-1760)
O COME, DIVINE MESSIAH	17TH CENT. FRENCH CAROL
AVE MARIA	FRANZ SCHÜBERT (1791-1828)
O SACRUM CONVIVIVUM	ROBERTO REMONDI (1850-1923)
VENI, JESU, AMOR MI	LUIGI CHERUBINI (1760-1842)
“LAUDATE DOMINUM” FR <i>VESPERAE SOLENNES DE CONFESSORE</i> , K. 339	W.A. MOZART (1756-1791)
TWO SETTINGS OF <i>NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEILAND*</i>	
I. D. BUXTEHUDE, BUXWV 211	
II. J.S. BACH (1685-1750), BWV 659	
PRAELUDIUM IN D, BUXWV 139	DIETRICH BUXTEHUDE (1637-1707)
“RORATE CAELI” FR <i>ADVENT: FIRST RELIGIOUS SUITE FOR ORGAN</i>	PIETRO YON (1886-1943)

### ABOUT THIS EVENING’S REPERTOIRE

Today’s recital is performed by the **Sister Servants of the Eternal Word**, a contemplative-active Community of women Religious founded in 1987 by Mother Mary Gabriel Long. The Sisters are committed to evangelization through catechesis and retreats, according to the ideals of St. Francis and St. Dominic who rebuilt the Church in truth and charity. They run Casa Maria retreat house in Birmingham and also participate in family catechesis, sacramental preparation, and other catechetical missions throughout the Diocese, always teaching "spiritual things spiritually" (1 Cor 2:13). The Sisters cherish the musical tradition of the Universal Church, and are delighted to share with you today a variety of choral, solo, and organ works that are often used devotionally in the context of the Sacred Liturgy. The program opens with a setting of St. Thomas Aquinas’ text (1224-1274) **Panis Angelicus** by Italian composer Claudio Casciolini (1670-1760). This text is a portion of the hymn, *Sacris solemnis*, written for Matins of Corpus Christi (the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ). This beloved hymn, reflecting Eucharistic theology and piety, has been set to music by composers throughout the ages. **O Come, Divine Messiah** is another well-known hymn, written by a French priest of the Cluniac order, Simon-Joseph Pelligrin (1663-1745). Father Pelligrin was known as a poet, writing many libretti as well as Carols. This beautiful Advent text speaks of the two-fold coming of Christ anticipated during the season of Advent: His first coming in Bethlehem, and His final coming at the end of time. Its musical setting, the 16th Century (cont.)

French tune known as VENEZ DIVIN MESSIE, conveys the joyful anticipation of the season of Advent. In 1825, Franz Schubert wrote the piece "Ellens dritter Gesang" as part of his musical settings of Walter Scott's poem: "The Lady of the Lake". The opening words of the piece, "Ave Maria," soon inspired renditions using the words of the **Ave Maria** (Eng, "Hail Mary"), quickly turning it into one of the most famous pieces of Western sacred music. The duet version sung today is inspired by the arrangement performed in recent years by the Irish trio known as "The Priests." **O Sacrum Convivium** is another text of Aquinas written for the solemnity of Corpus Christi, in this case as the Magnificat antiphon for Vespers. The translation reads: "O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received: the memory of his Passion is recalled, the soul is filled with grace, and the pledge of future glory is given us." Like his other Eucharistic poetry, it is a favorite text for composers, including the little known Roberto Remondi (1850-1923), whose setting is featured today. The "Alleluias" at the end attest to the wonders of so great a gift, for in the Holy Eucharist Christ's sacrifice is re-presented, we are filled with divine life (grace) when we receive Him in Holy Communion. **Veni, Jesu, Amor Mi** is a charming setting attributed to Italian composer Cherubini. As a composer, Cherubini was known for his operas and sacred music, and was regarded by Beethoven as one of his greatest contemporaries. This beloved piece can be applied not only to Christ's coming to us in Holy Communion, but to His two-fold coming prepared for during Advent. Mozart wrote **Laudate Dominum** for his *Solemn Vespers of Confessors* (NB: "confessor" in this case being a saint who is a priest.) The text, from Psalm 117, is traditionally chanted after Benediction during the reposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The Gloria Patri follows the Psalm verse and the piece ends with a florid "Amen." This version is soprano and organ. One of Mozart's most moving sacred compositions, it portrays the joy of praising the Lord: "*Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes/O Praise the Lord All You Nations!*" A master of the Baroque, Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707) is equally regarded as a composer and organist. Many of the era's great musicians, including a young Johann Sebastian Bach would travel to see the Buxtehude perform. His florid setting of the Advent hymn **Nun komm der Heiden Heiland** (itself a metrical version of the Latin hymn *Veni, Redemptor gentium*) is a characteristic example of his chorale prelude style; it is clearly imitated by Bach (with some Italian additions!) in his setting of the same chorale. Buxtehude's **Praeludium in D** begins with a delightful dialogue between two voices, answered soon by the full organ. It moves into a fugue where four voices engage in a lighthearted exchange. The voice played in the pedal uses nearly the whole pedal board, giving the organist a good stretch of the legs! The piece then turns a bit somber with a lyric Adagio, but is soon off-set by a new exhilarating figuration. After some excitement, the listener can catch his breath in another brief, ornamented Adagio. The final section of the piece builds to a climatic conclusion, gaining speed, volume, and complexity to end with the sound of the full organ. Pietro Yon, an Italian-born organist and composer, moved to the United States at age twenty-one. He dedicated much of his work to liturgical music and was given the honorary title of the "Titular Organist of the Vatican". The first movement of his **Rorate Caeli** is a solo organ rendition of the Advent chant. This ancient hymn expresses the people's sincere contrition for their sins and calls on God to "send forth the Lamb...that he may take away the yoke of our captivity." The chant is introduced in the opening bars of the movement with a mild texture, which is echoed in the accompaniment. The melody adopts the verse of the Gregorian chant in a lovely solo. Then the tenor voice repeats the theme with a deep, rich texture. To close, Yon surprises the listener with the unexpected sound of the full organ, as if suddenly calling out: "*Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness*" (Isaiah 45:8)!

*\*Settings performed by Bruce Ludwick, Jr., Cathedral Director of Music and Organist.*

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