

WINTERSCAPES

SUN **DECEMBER 5** 3:00

GRANT HARVILLE, MUSIC DIRECTOR & CONDUCTOR

Three Wassail Dances Philip Lane

*Somerset
Yorkshire
Gloucestershire*

Christus Part 1, Opus 97 Felix Mendelssohn

Slalom Carter Pann

INTERMISSION

Grace Grant Harville

TEXT *BY* **PAUL ZARZYSKI**

*Commissioned to
Celebrate the 60th Anniversary
of the Great Falls Symphonic Choir*

A Merry Christmas Sing Along Robert Wendel

Sleigh Ride Leroy Anderson

WITH **GUEST CONDUCTOR DAVID SASLAV**

SUPPORT FOR THIS CONCERT PROVIDED BY



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PROGRAM NOTES

Three Wassail Dances 1973

Philip Lane | b. 1950

PHILIP LANE IS A BRITISH COMPOSER

specializing in “light music,” an ill-defined genre of classical music written with the goal of immediate accessibility to wide audiences, often intended for holidays or patriotic events, and tracing its origins to the works of 19th century composers like Arthur Sullivan and Edward German. While they may chafe at such a designation, some later composers who might be said to have written, at least occasionally, in that style are Malcolm Arnold, John Rutter, Bryan Kelly, and Eric Coates. There has historically been a strong overlap between light music and film composition; much of Lane’s work has focused on film scoring and reconstruction.

A *wassail* is a kind of English cider; it would give its name to the Yuletide door-to-door caroling tradition, due the warming comfort it provided during that cold-weather activity. (Technically, wassailing includes a trick-or-treat-like request for a gift, such as the increasingly aggressive request for figgy pudding in “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.”) Lane’s **Wassail Dances** were commissioned by the Gloucestershire Youth Orchestra and feature three movements, each developments of a traditional wassail song from the English counties of Somerset, Yorkshire, and Gloucestershire.

This is the GFSA’s first performance of the work.

Christus 1852

Felix Mendelssohn | 1809 - 1847

FELIX MENDELSSOHN WAS PROBABLY THE IDEAL

choice to follow in the footsteps of Handel and Haydn (see notes for *Queen of the Night* and *Jubilee*) to become England’s next great German musical import. Musically, he was a prodigious talent with a strong interest in earlier musical styles; by the time he was appointed music director in Dusseldorf at age 24, he was familiar with many of Handel’s oratorios and would program many of Handel’s and Haydn’s sacred choral works. Practically, he came from a rich and well-connected family (it seems as though every reasonably important figure of the German Romantic movement ended up in the Mendelssohns’ living room at some point); regular trips to London presented no obstacle.

When he made his first tour of Great Britain at age 20, he met all of London’s leading musical figures and conducted and performed numerous times within a few months of his arrival. He would leave London with a commission for an opera at Covent Garden. While the bulk of his professional activity remained in Germany, his trips to England would become frequent enough for the country to become something of a second home.

Mendelssohn’s two late oratorios, *Elijah* and the unfinished **Christus**, were thus intended for both German and English audiences. (Mendelssohn never heard a German-language performance of *Elijah*.) With Mendelssohn’s premature death at age 48 interrupting the project, there is much we cannot know about the intended final state of **Christus**, though it was apparently an extremely ambitious project, with three gargantuan sections. **Christus**, Part I, compiled by the composer’s brother, tells the tale of the magi: an initial recitative sets the scene; the chorus men then take the role of the wise men, searching for the newborn King; finally, the full chorus provides theological commentary.

This is the GFSA’s first performance of the complete **Christus**, Part I, though the final chorus has been performed several times.

Slalom 2003

Carter Pann | b. 1972

SLALOM IS PROBABLY American composer Carter Pann’s most popular work, in both its orchestral and wind ensemble versions. Pann’s ode to downhill skiing starts with a quote from the scherzo of Beethoven’s *Ninth* before jumping into a thrilling perpetual motion groove that moves through various mountainside scenes: “First Run,” “Open Meadow, Champagne Powder,” “Straight Down, TUCK,” and “On One Ski, Gyrating,” among others.

This is the GFSA’s first performance of the work.

Grace 2019

Grant Harville | b. 1980

THE GFSA HAS A LONG TRADITION of

commissioning works for important anniversaries, and it was important to me that the 60th anniversary of the Symphonic Choir be celebrated the same way. After contemplating a few composers to approach and texts to use, it occurred to me to take a different tack: To commission a new text, for which I would write the music.

Finding the poet proved relatively easy: as a local poet and a big name in the world of Western poetry, Paul Zarzyski was an obvious choice. His writing style is evocative, challenging, and imbued with a strong sense of place which I felt our Montana audience would find meaningful. (There was nothing in his output of what I feared, in my ignorance, would sound like cheesy country music lyrics.) Fortunately, he agreed to take on the project.

Paul was given something resembling *carte blanche* for the project, with only a few things I asked him to keep in mind: The work was to be an anniversary celebration for the Symphonic Choir, and dedicated to its founding and long-time director Mary Moore; the words would be coming out of 100 mouths simultaneously, so should feel communal and/or universal; and finally, the premiere would take place on our December concert, so a winter theme would be appropriate.

Far be it for me to analyze Paul's text, or claim significances in it of which he may not approve, but I believe I can reveal this much: the text (and thus the music) is in three large sections; the poetry (and thus the music) alludes to the folk song "Home on the Range," and the various "moons" (such as the "Moon of the Popping Trees") described in the text are Native American names for the month of December.

—PROGRAM NOTES BY GRANT HARVILLE



406.453.4102

11 Third Street North

Box 1078, Great Falls, MT 59403

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