

# Program Notes and Texts

## Introduction

Do others remember the evocative passage in one of his books where Rilke, the German poet (whose *French* poems we'll hear in this concert), imagines the education of the Prodigal Son in the "distant country" he found himself in after leaving home? Rilke writes this: "He was like one who hears a glorious language and feverishly conceives plans to write, to create in it. He had still to experience the dismay of learning how difficult this language was; he was unwilling to believe at first that a long life could pass away in forming the first short phrases that have no sense."

While these words apply specifically to Rilke's eventual mastery of French (as we can see here in his *Chansons des Roses*), they also evoke the hidden years that lie behind the finished works of this program's musicians and authors. Here we have Lee Kesselman, Francis Poulenc and Eric Whitacre composing their songs to Latin words. To which we can add John Joubert's use of the 15<sup>th</sup> century macaronic (English and Latin) carol, "There is No Rose of such Virtue."

Here we have composers who have mastered two languages – that of music and that of words. As Rilke knew so well, creativity requires great patience, yet we don't see the patience, the "long years" behind their songs. It is something like a delightful mystery – it is both transcendent and taken for granted. Enjoy.

## **Hodie by Lee Kesselman**

<i>Hodie Christus natus est:</i>	Christ is born today;
<i>hodie salvator apparuit:</i>	today the Saviour has appeared;
<i>hodie in terra canunt Angeli,</i>	today on earth the angels sing;
<i>laetantur Archangeli:</i>	the archangels rejoice;
<i>hodie exsultant justi, dicentes:</i>	today the righteous rejoice, saying:
<i>Gloria in excelsis Deo, alleluja.</i>	"Glory to God in the highest, Alleluia!"

Lee Kesselman's own program note calls this piece a "fanfare" – an onomatopoeic word borrowed directly from the French. We all know that it means "joyous, exuberant music." But we don't know how hard

it is to write one! Kesselman describes his as “heralding the great news of Birth in the time of darkness.” He then goes beyond describing it to giving a “note” on how it should be performed: “All of the text should be sung with the kind of breathless enthusiasm that ensues when one just can’t get the words out fast enough to match their importance.”

We all may not be able to enjoy Latin as a “glorious language,” but many of the words here are cognates, and we can sense how the additional syllables in the Latin words for “today” (*hodie*), “angels” (*angeli*) and “God” (*Deo*) add to the power and musicality of the piece. The text is from the traditional Latin service for Christmas Day. It is from Luke 2:11, 13-14 and Psalm 31:11 – with a few additional *hodies*, and an added, universally musical, *alleluja*.

Lee Kesselman is a double classmate of Conductor Paul Rusterholz as both of them are graduates of Macalester College in St. Paul and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. For more about him, ask Paul!

### ***O Magnum Mysterium* by Francis Poulenc**

<i>O magnum mysterium,</i>	O great mystery,
<i>et admirabile sacramentum,</i>	and wondrous sacrament,
<i>ut animalia viderent</i>	that animals should see
<i>Dominum natum,</i>	the new-born Lord,
<i>jacentem in praesepio:</i>	lying in their manger!
<i>Beata Virgo, cujus viscera</i>	Blessed is the Virgin whose womb
<i>meruerunt portare</i>	was worthy to bear
<i>Dominum Christum.</i>	the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the first of the “Four Motets for the Season of Christmas” that Poulenc composed in 1952. The words, with their surprisingly modern internal and final rhymes on the letters “um,” have been set by many other composers. They, too, are both simple and complex. They describe the manger scene – the *praesepio* – that St. Francis was the first to make into a kind of street theatre. And then, no doubt for a greater reason than the rhyme (thought that’s important too!), the short hymn describes the scene as a “sacrament.” It’s St. Augustine who has given us the classic definition of this word: “an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.”

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) wrote both “light” and “serious” music. He is perhaps best known for his 1957 opera *Dialogues des Carmélites*, about the heroic nuns who were martyred on the guillotine during the French revolution. But he also wrote a comic opera “in the line of Offenbach,” based on Guillaume Apollinaire’s 1917 play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (“The Breasts of Tiresias”).

### ***There is No Rose of Such Virtue* by John Joubert**

There is no rose of such virtue  
as is the rose that bare Jesu. Alleluia.

For in this rose containèd was  
heav’n and earth in little space: Res miranda (*a wondrous thing*).

By that rose we may well see  
there be one God in Persons Three: Pares forma (*of one form/of equal nature*).

Then leave we all this worldly mirth  
and follow we this joyous birth: Transeamus (*let us go over*).

Leaving aside the perhaps not-so-important question of whether the words “was” and “space” actually did rhyme in the mid-1400s, here we have both a simple and deeply theological carol. It’s sung by the shepherds. How do we know this? Because its last word comes directly from Luke 2:16 where the shepherds exclaim, “Let us go over” (= *transeamus*) to Bethlehem to see this thing (= *res*) that has taken place.” The shepherds themselves are the theologians, and not just because they can speak some Latin! They are versed in the subset of theology called “typology.” They don’t mention Mary directly. Instead, they refer to her as “the Rose.” And they show they’ve got a handle on one of the major differences between the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed by further defining the nature of the Trinity with the phrase *pares forma* – “of equal (or “of one”) form (or nature).”

John Joubert is a South African/English composer of French Huguenot descent on his father’s side. *There is No Rose* is one of the best-known pieces of this international composer, who celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday “just last year” in 2017.

## ***Remembering* by Joan Szymko**

In the secret recesses of the heart  
beyond the teachings of this world  
calls a still small voice  
singing a song unchanged  
from the foundation of the world.

Speak to me in sunsets and in starlight.  
Speak to me in the eyes of a child.  
You, who call from a smile,  
My cosmic beloved  
Tell who I am and who I always will be.  
Help me to remember  
that I am both the singer and the song.

– *Joan Borysenko (b. 1945)*

The touching poem here recreated in the language of music will no doubt resonate in many different ways with us. For my part, I hear in it a direct allusion to the prophet Elijah’s encounter with the divine in 1 Kings 19:12 where God is not found in the wind or in the earthquake or in the subsequent fire, but in “a still small voice.” I also see a connection between the final line about the common identity of the singer and the song with the famous poem by the poet Yeats that ends, “Who can tell the dancer from the dance?”

Joan Szymko’s one-sentence description of her setting of the poem by Joan Borysenko is both simple and profound: “At its best, this work is a prayerful meditation on listening deeply to the still small voice within that guides the outer life.” As you read, or better yet, re-read the poem, note that it is like many of the Psalms: it is addressed directly to God.

Szymko (born 1957) is an American composer who “is alive and well” and living in Portland, Oregon. But she also travels extensively, “workshopping” (her term) her music across the USA and in the Netherlands.

## **Les Chansons des Roses, by Morten Lauridsen**

### **En Une Seule Fleur**

*C'est pourtant nous  
qui t'avons proposé  
de remplir ton calice.  
Enchanté de cet artifice,  
ton abondance l'avait osé.*

And yet it is we  
who proposed  
that you fill your chalice.  
Enchanted by this charade,  
your abundance dared to do it.

*Tu étais assez riche,  
pour devenir cent  
fois toi-même  
en une seule fleur;  
c'est l'état de celui qui aime...  
Mais tu n'as pas pensé ailleurs.*

You were rich enough  
to fulfill  
yourself a hundred times over  
in a single flower;  
such is the state of one who loves...  
But you never did think otherwise.

### **Contre Qui, Rose**

*Contre qui, rose,  
avez-vous adopté  
ces épines?  
Votre joie trop fine  
vous a-t-elle forcée  
de devenir cette chose  
armée?*

Against whom, rose  
have you assumed  
these thorns?  
Is it your too fragile joy  
that forced you  
to become this  
armed thing?

*Mais de qui vous protège  
cette arme exagérée?  
Combien d'ennemis vous ai-je  
enlevés  
qui ne la craignaient point?  
Au contraire, d'été en automne  
vous blessez les soins  
qu'on vous donne.*

But from whom does it protect you,  
this exaggerated defense?  
How many enemies have I  
lifted from you  
who did not fear it at all?  
On the contrary, from summer to autumn  
you wound the affection  
that is given you.

### **Dirait-on**

*Abandon entouré d'abandon,  
tendresse touchant  
aux tendresses...  
C'est ton intérieur qui sans cesse  
se caresse, dirait-on;*

Surrender enveloped by surrender,  
tenderness touching  
tenderness...  
Your deepest being endlessly  
caresses itself, one could say;

*se caresse en soi-même,*                      caresseses itself in itself,  
*par son propre reflet éclairé.*              illumined by its own reflection.  
*Ainsi tu inventes le thème*                  And so you invent the theme  
*du Narcisse exaucé.*                          of Narcissus fulfilled.

– *poems by Rainer Maria Rilke; English translations by Barbara and Erica Muhl, with revisions by Dr. Barbara Lomas Rusterholz*

These three short lyrics are meant to be read, and sung, together. They are love songs – but contain more than a hint of “the war between the sexes,” together with some high school-like behavior, and some deep psychology (or it is mythology?).

The voice in the poems is clearly in love with the woman, with the flower. Let’s just call her “Rose.” Rose is beautiful and she knows it. The first poem is reminiscent of high school as there’s a group, a “we,” with whom Rose flirts. They challenge her to show off by “filling her own cup.” Here Rilke shows his hard-gained ability in the language. Whatever idiomatic meaning the expression “fill your own cup” might have had, he plays with a dictionary double entendre: that between “chalice” and “calyx” – between the cup of a glass and the cup of a ... flower. Rose, who has the concentrated beauty of 100 flowers, takes up the challenge. And then she tosses it off, for how could she do otherwise?

In the second lyric, the poet has a concrete, or rather an earthy, relation with Rose. He compares himself to a gardener who’s often stuck by her thorns. And he pauses to ponder the evolutionary purpose of the thorns, for they certainly do not protect the flower from its real enemies (read “pests like Japanese beetles”!) that the gardener himself has warded off. It’s perhaps mixing metaphors to say that Rose “bites the hand that feeds her,” but that’s what she does.

The final poem is something like a denouement, though it only temporarily unties the knot of the romance. Here Rose becomes another flower altogether. She becomes a narcissus. But she’s a modern narcissist who seems to have the best of both worlds. She doesn’t drown in self-love, but is fulfilled in it. Rilke calls this a new “theme.” But didn’t we all know at least one girl (or guy) in high school like that?

Morten Lauridsen’s own program note praises Rilke’s poems as “exquisite” and “light, joyous and playful.” He says, “I tried to capture their delicate beauty and sensuousness.”

Prof. Lauridsen is an example of Kierkegaardian “rare continuity.” He stayed on to teach at the same college he attended as an undergraduate: the University of Southern California. He’s been there over 50 years! The citation of the National Medal of Arts he received from President Bush in 2007 read, “For his composition of radiant choral works combining musical beauty, power and spiritual depth that have thrilled audiences worldwide.”

***Come to Me, My Love, by Norman Dello Joio***

Come to me in the night,  
Come, come to me in the silence of the darkening night.  
Come to me, come in the speaking silence of a dream;  
With soft and rounded cheeks and eyes as bright as sunlight on a stream.

O! Come, come back in tears,  
O my love of finished years.  
In dreams too bittersweet;  
Of Paradise where souls of love abide and meet,  
Come back my love to me.

Yet come to me in dreams that I may live my life again;  
A mem’ry of those thirsting longing eyes, those eyes so bright;  
Come back to me my love that I may give,  
Pulse for pulse, breath for breath.  
Speak low, lean low,

O come in silent dreams, my love;  
Whisper low, as long ago.

– *based on Christina Rossetti’s poem, “Echo”*

How many of us remember having to study mythology “in order to better understand literature”? Whether we did or not, we all need a quick refresher course in the myth of the original Echo: She was a very talkative nymph who upset Juno, the queen of the gods, to such an extent that she decided to punish her. She transformed Echo into someone who could never be the first to speak, but at the same time could never be silent after anyone else spoke. And she made beautiful Echo (whom she suspected had been carrying on with her husband Jupiter) fall in love with Narcissus. But Narcissus loved only himself, so he never spoke to her! Poor Echo’s body died of this unhappy love. But

her voice remained.

Norman Dello Joio's song is an abbreviated and slightly adapted version of Christina Rossetti's poem entitled simply *Echo*. (It being so close to Christmas, we might remember her as the author of the words of the carol *In the Bleak Midwinter*.)

*Come to Me My Love* is both deeply personal and mythological. We hear a personal lament. We hear a universal expression of unhappy, unfulfilled love. We assume that the voice of the poem is like Echo's, a woman's voice. But we don't know. Once disembodied, Echo's voice became, of course, bisexual.

Norman Dello Joio started life in 1913 in New York City as the son of Italian immigrants. After a career as a professor and composer for over 60 years, he died at his home in East Hampton, Long Island in 2008. His giving Christina Rossetti's *Echo* back her voice in *Come to Me, My Love* dates from 1973.

### **Three choruses from Leonard Bernstein's *Candide***

#### ***The Best of All Possible Worlds***

Let us review lesson eleven  
Paragraph two, axiom seven.  
Once one dismisses the rest of all possible worlds,  
One finds that this is the best of all possible worlds.

Pray, classify pigeons and camels.  
Pigeons can fly, camels are mammals.  
There is a reason for everything under the sun.

Objection!

What about snakes?

*Well, let me see!*

'Twas Snake that tempted Mother Eve.

Because of Snake we now believe

That though depraved, we can be saved from hellfire and damnation.

Because of Snake's temptation.

If Snake had not seduced our lot, and primed us for salvation, (Amen, Amen!)

Jehovah could not pardon all the sins that we call cardinal,  
Involving bed and bottle!

Now on to Aristotle!

*Okay!*

Mankind is one, all men are brothers,  
As you'd have done, do unto others,  
It's understood in this best of all possible worlds,  
All's for the good in the best of all possible worlds.

Objection!

*Yes! What about war?*

*Well, it seems to me ...*

*Though war may seem a bloody curse,  
It is a blessing in reverse.*

When canons roar, both rich and poor  
By danger are united.

Till every wrong is righted.

Philosophers make evident that point that I have cited. (Brrr-rum, The drum!)

'Tis war makes equal, as it were, the noble and the commoner,  
Thus war improves relations.

Now on to conjugations.

Amo, amas, amat, amamus ...

Proving that this is the best of all possible worlds.

With love and kisses, the best of all possible worlds ...

Quod erat demonstrandum! Q.E.D....

– lyrics by John la Touche

### ***This World (Candide's Lament)***

Is this all then, this the world?  
Death and envy, greed and blindness?  
What is kindness but a lie?  
What to live for but to die?

I would never miss this world  
Never this one which is hateful.  
Let me die then, only grateful  
Cunegonde, dying sooner,  
Was spared this world.

What is kindness but a lie?  
What to live for but to die?

– lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

## ***Make our Garden Grow***

You've been a fool and so have I,  
But let's be man and wife.  
And let us try before we die  
To make some sense of Life.

*Refrain: We're neither pure nor wise nor good;  
We'll do the best we know;  
We'll build our house,  
And chop our wood,  
And make our garden grow.  
And make our garden grow.*

I thought the world was sugar-cake,  
For so our Master said;  
But now I'll teach my hands to bake  
Our loaf of daily bread. *Refrain*

Let dreamers dream what worlds they please;  
Those Edens never can be found.  
The sweetest flowers, the fairest trees  
Are grown in solid ground. *Refrain*

– lyrics by Richard Wilbur

To be like *Candide's* comic German professor as he lectures away in the halls of chateau *Thunder-ten-tronckh*, I need ask for a show of hands. "How many have read Voltaire's classic novel of 1759?" Okay. "How many have seen the Leonard Bernstein play, either at its not-so-successful opening in 1956 or in any one of its later, successful revivals?" Okay. "How many of us here were present in February 2007 in the Viterbo Fine Arts Center to hear the La Crosse Symphony play the overture to *Candide*?" Very good! Class almost dismissed!

The play – like the novel – is a comedy. (Okay, the play is a *musical* comedy!) And here we may remember how the French writer Paul Valéry once observed, "Everything is allowed in music." The choral numbers sung today represent three out of the original twenty some. But they essentially tell the whole story: the happy beginning, the melodramatic middle and the happy ending.

The first song is about the carefreeness, and craziness, of school.

Professor Pangloss is giving a reductionist lecture on Leibniz's philosophy, summing it up in the repeated phrase: "The best of all possible worlds." We mainly have the professor's voice. But there are also some responses and questions from his students, who actually number only two – Candide and the beautiful daughter of the chateau, Cunegonde. The song doesn't tell us, but everyone knows, that they're in love with each other.

The second song, whose lyrics are by a very young Stephen Sondheim, is itself based on a lie. Candide thinks that Cunegonde has been raped and killed by Bulgarian soldiers. (I can still "hear" my high school French teacher's explosive pronunciation of the "B" in "*les Bulgares*"!) But we need to remember the subtitle of Voltaire's novel, which is *Optimism*. The lament is only a momentary creation of some dramatic tension in the midst of Candide's innate cheerfulness.

The final song expresses the "grown-up/sadder-but-wiser/hard-won" view of the two lovers. They sing about how their school days are long over; of how they've gone on beyond Professor Pangloss (as students are supposed to do); and of how, as in so many stories and plays, they have each other. Words from the refrain of this song have long been proverbial in French: "*Il faut cultiver notre jardin*" – translated here as "We'll make our garden grow."

Leonard Bernstein's life and career can hardly be summed up in a few sentences. We all know him for his *West Side Story* and as the legendary conductor of the New York Philharmonic. He was also an author (among his books are the 1959 *The Joy of Music* and the 1966 *The Infinite Variety of Music*). And he was an innovative teacher, being among the first to use television to reach a very large "classroom." (His *Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic* are available on DVD. Can we have a show of hands of how many have seen them? Okay. Good work, class dismissed!)

### ***Sainte-Chapelle* by Eric Whitacre**

<i>Castissima virgo</i>	An innocent girl
<i>Advenit in capellam;</i>	Entered the chapel
<i>Et angeli in vitro</i>	And the angels in the glass
<i>Molliter cantaverunt,</i>	Softly sang,
<i>"Hosanna in excelsis!"</i>	"Hosanna in the highest!"

<i>Illa castissima Susurravit, “Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!”</i>	The innocent girl Whispered, “Holy! Holy! Holy!”
<i>Lux implevit spatium, Multiformis colore; Et audivit vocem suam Resonare, “Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!”</i>	Light filled the chamber, Many-colored light; She heard her voice Echo, “Holy! Holy! Holy!”
<i>Molliter angeli cantaverunt, “Dominus Deus sabaath, Pleni sunt coeli et terra Gloria tua!” “Hosanna in excelsis! Hosanna in excelsis!”</i>	Softly the angels sang “Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full Of your glory!” “Hosannah in the highest! Hosannah in the highest!”
<i>Vox in lumine transformat, Et lumen canit, “Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!”</i>	Her voice became light, And the light sang, “Holy! Holy! Holy!”
<i>Lumen canit molliter, “Dominus Deus sabaath, Pleni sunt coeli et terra Gloria tua!”</i>	The light sang softly, “Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full Of your glory!”
<i>Castissima virgo Advenit in capellam; Et angeli in vitro Molliter cantaverunt.</i>	An innocent girl Entered the chapel And the angels in the glass Softly sang.

– Latin poem by Charles Anthony Silvestri

Another song in the “glorious language” of Latin! And another song from France, as it takes place in the royal chapel of the French king who was also a saint: St. Louis IX. The *Sainte-Chapelle* is known as a “Gothic Jewel” right in the center of Paris. It was built between 1239 and 1248, originally to “house” the holy relics which the king had recently purchased.

The subject of Charles Silvestri's Latin poem is the idea of the holy, and of how an exquisitely beautiful structure can make this idea real and tangible – felt and even heard! Silvestri imagines “an innocent girl” (literally “a most chaste young woman”) who mystically hears the angels depicted in the chapel's stained-glass window singing. This initiates a sung dialogue, an antiphony, between the girl and the angels. Then the climax of the song occurs: the mystical voice – of both the angels and the girl – turns into the already transformed light that filters through the stained-glass. There is yet another transformation – the light itself starts to sing. If we ask, “What language does the light sing?” we have Paul Rusterholz's answer: “It sings music of holiness that combines ancient, chant-like melody with modern dissonances.”

Eric Whitacre (born 1970 in Las Vegas) has won Grammys. He's composed several songs with Latin texts besides *Sainte-Chapelle*. He's created the first “on-line choir,” which brings voices together from all over the world. He's the artist-in-residence for the Walt Disney Concert Hall's Master Chorale. And he's written a symphony for wood instruments entitled *Godzilla Eats Las Vegas!* What more is there to say? Lots!

### ***Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor* by Irving Berlin**

“Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

– *Emma Lazarus (1849-1887)*

We'll hear the famous words three times, so maybe there's time for three short stories – plus an appendix.

The Statue of Liberty: It was a gift from France to America. The original hope was for it to “open” in the centennial year of 1876. But it took ten years longer for “Liberty Enlightening the World” to raise her torch (“whose flame is the imprisoned lightning”) above the southwest entrance to New York harbor. Frédéric Bartholdi was the sculptor who created its form. Gustave Eiffel was the engineer who built its structure. It was finally dedicated on October 26, 1886 – after much publicity and much fundraising on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Poem: Emma Lazarus wrote a sonnet, “The New Colossus,” the last five lines of which have taken on a life of their own, for a fundraising auction of art and manuscripts in 1883. She was well-known enough to have her poem published in both *The New York Times*, and the paper behind the most successful fundraising, Pulitzer’s *New York World*. But over the course of the three years before the dedication of the statue the poem was forgotten. Emma Lazarus herself died the next year, in 1887, and became yet more forgotten. It was not until 1903 that a plaque containing the poem was mounted on a wall inside the pedestal. (It’s now located in the statue’s museum.) The famous lines of her poem are those that Lazarus imagines Liberty herself “cries with silent lips.” Lazarus, among countless others, had seen small-scale models of the statue, so she knew that Liberty did not have her mouth open!

The Song: It is the last number, the finale, of Irving Berlin’s 1949 Broadway musical *Miss Liberty*. It too has a life of its own now apart from its original setting. All you really need to know is that the plot of the musical hinges on whether the model for “Miss Liberty” was a beautiful French actress or Bartholdi’s mother! It is also interesting to learn that the musical was written to capitalize on the huge emotional significance the statue had come to have for the thousands and thousands of soldiers and sailors who passed by it during World War II.

The Composer: We all know his songs – from *White Christmas* to *God Bless America*. But do you know he wrote some 1,500 of them? We know some of his musicals, with the 1946 *Annie Get Your Gun* being the most famous. We know some of his movies, like *Holiday Inn* and *Easter Parade*. But there are many more. And do you know that he lived almost to the age of Moses, dying in 1989 at the age of 101? And that he wrote one of his last songs for the 1966 revival of *Annie Get Your Gun*?

***Tenting On The Old Camp Ground* by Walter Kittredge, arranged by Dale Warland, guitar part edited by Jeffrey Van**

We are tenting tonight on the old camp ground,  
Give us a song to cheer  
Our weary hearts, a song of home,  
And friends we love so dear.

*Refrain: Many are the hearts that are weary tonight,  
Wishing for the war to cease;*

*Many are the hearts looking for the right  
To see the dawn of peace.  
Tenting tonight, tenting tonight, tenting on the old camp ground.*

We've been tenting tonight on the old camp ground  
Thinking of days gone by,  
Of the loved ones at home that gave us the hand,  
And the tear that said "Good-bye!"

We are weary of war on the old camp ground,  
Many dead and gone,  
Of the brave and true who've left their homes,  
Others been wounded long.

### *Refrain*

My father would sing "Tenting Tonight" on our family's not-too-frequent camping trips. My mother's great-grandfather was an officer with the Union Army at the battle of Shiloh during the Civil War. So this song has added significance for me.

Walter Kittridge wrote it in 1863, on the night when he couldn't sleep after being rejected as physically unfit to serve in the Union Army. He also wrote some 500 other songs. He toured by himself and with the well-known Hutchinson Family. But he is known today only for this one song. You don't need to be a soldier to imagine what it feels like to be one. The mood here is one expressed in any esprit de corps: there is pride in doing one's duty; there is sadness in having to do it.

### **Let Me Fly arranged and adapted by Robert DeCormier**

'Way down yonder in the middle of the fiel',  
Angel a-workin' at the chariot wheel.  
Not so partic'lar 'bout workin' at the wheel,  
I jus' wan' to see how the chariot feel.

*Refrain: Oh let me fly, oh let me fly  
Oh let me fly to Mount Zion,  
Lord, Lord ...*

Meet the hypocrite on the street.  
First thing he do is show his teeth.  
Next thing he do is tell a lie.  
Well, the best thing to do is pass him by. *Refrain*

I got a mother in the Promised Land.  
Well, I ain't gonna stop 'til I shake her hand.  
Not so partic'lar 'bout shakin' her hand,  
But I just wan' to get to the Promised Land. *Refrain*

I heard such a-rumbalin' in the sky,  
I thought my Lord was passin' by.  
'Twas the good ol' chariot drawin' nigh.  
Well, it shook the earth, swept the sky. *Refrain*

I want wings, I wan' to fly,  
Oh Lord, I wan' to fly  
Oh won't you let me fly  
to Mount Zion, Lord, Lord? *Refrain*

Spirituals, like language itself, have no one single composer. Perhaps this adds to their "glory." Sometimes the words of spirituals succeed in doing what is very rare in religious music and especially rare in choral music – to interject some humor.

The humor of this spiritual arises out of its incongruous scenes: an angel on earth working on his broken-down heavenly chariot (like an episode in *Star Wars* or *E.T.!*); a smiling (or is it a "biting"!) and lying sinner met by chance on the street; and the singer's longing to be reunited with his mother in the Promised Land (but he confesses that he really just wants to get there himself!). And then there's the verbal humor of the repeated phrase that creates a rare moment of reflection: the "not so partic'lar 'bout..."

So don't be too shy, or too Norwegian to laugh in church. And don't be so shy or "so partic'lar" to join in a big "AMEN!" at the end.

*Program notes by Rev. Donald Fox, whom Rilke's words helped inspire to learn French, Danish and Italian. And now he wants to learn "the glorious language" of his Wisconsin great-great-grandfather – Welsh! So far in this quest, he's learned about fifteen words; he's trying to memorize the original Welsh of "Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly" and "All Through the Night"; and he's written over 1,000 verses to his own little tune for the classic Mother Goose Rhyme, "Taffy was a Welshman."*