

Music notes for April 28, 2024

This weekend, we are marking the 50th anniversary of the first ordinations of women to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church with a series of special events and observances. In celebration of that anniversary, today's services feature several music selections composed by women or that highlight the role of women in the church.

Holy Eucharist at 9 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.

Renaissance woman **Dorothy Papadakos** is a Juilliard-trained organist, composer, playwright, and published novelist. She was appointed as the first (and thus far, only) woman to serve as Cathedral Organist at New York City's Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a post in which she served from 1990 to 2003. Her organ piece, "The women at the tomb," engages with the Easter narrative by centering the three women, highlighting the important role that women have held—and continue to hold—in the church since its earliest days. A sonic illustration of early Easter morning, the piece begins with a somber approach to the tomb but gradually builds to exclamations of jubilant celebration. Throughout, Papadakos interweaves phrases of the Eastertide hymn "Hail thee, festival day" (#175 in *The Hymnal* 1982); her colorful harmonies and melodic gestures nod toward her background as a jazz musician and renowned improviser.

In December 2022, St. Peter's Cathedral in Adelaide, Australia offered a festal service of Choral Evensong to celebrate the 30th anniversary of women's ordination to the priesthood in Australia. For the occasion, the cathedral commissioned local composer **Rachel Bruerville** to write a choral anthem, resulting in "Make Way," a setting of text from Isaiah 43:18-19. Bruerville weaves into her beautifully simple setting of the text the melody of the civil rights anthem "We shall overcome," perhaps celebrating the progress of 30 years of women's ordination while simultaneously recognizing the work that remains ahead of us in our world.

Canadian choral conductor and composer **Stephanie Martin** serves as a professor of music on the faculty of York University in Toronto, Ontario. In her choral composition "*O sacrum convivium*" ("O sacred feast, in which Christ is partaken"), she sets text attributed to 13th-century theologian Thomas Aquinas in long, flowing melodic lines, creating a compact but joyful musical celebration of the Eucharist.

Described by her teacher Max Reger as "a strikingly creative talent," 19th-century German composer **Johanna Senfter** wrote prolifically in multiple genres. Senfter's organ music serves as a quintessential example of the German late Romantic style, most notably in its dense counterpoint and vivid harmonic language, charged with heightened chromaticism. Senfter's *10 Choralvorspiele* (10 Chorale Preludes), Werke

70a-k embody the quintessence of this musically maximalist style, albeit scaled into short-form miniatures—“bonsai German Romantic,” perhaps. The exuberant “*Lobet den Herrn*” (“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”), Werk 70f, sets the German chorale tune (#390 in *The Hymnal* 1982) with a kaleidoscopic palette of wildly chromatic harmony and thickets of full-fisted chords.

Celtic Evensong and Communion

Today’s service of Celtic Evensong includes musical selections by a few of the female composers and arrangers with some of the longest history of representation at our Celtic services. **Sally DeFord** is a prolific composer whose works are primarily given in offering to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Her setting of *Finlandia*, the hymn tune originating from the eponymous tone poem by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, beautifully showcases its stirring melody. **Sylvia Woods** is an American composer and harpist, best known for her worldwide renaissance of the Celtic harp, or *cláirseach*. Noticing a dearth of repertoire and resources for the folk harp, Woods began composing for the instrument in 1978. Several of her arrangements of traditional tunes have become favorites at this service. **Anne Krentz Organ** is represented in our Celtic music library perhaps more heavily than any other composer, as she has written many collections of beautiful, accessible, and well-crafted arrangements of traditional hymn tunes for piano solo or piano and instruments. Organ also serves as Director of Music for St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Park Ridge, Illinois. Harpist **Sunita Staneslow** is a native of Minnesota and a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, but now calls Israel her home. Like Organ, she has become widely known for her collections of accessible music arrangements, and since 2007 has worked as a therapeutic harpist at the Schneider Children’s Medical Center in Israel. **Deborah Govenor** hails from Ohio and is a graduate of the Ohio State University; she serves as the editor of organ music for Beckenhorst Press. While primarily a pianist and organist, her other musical interests include Celtic harp, hammered and mountain dulcimer, and bowed psaltery. Her peaceful arrangements of traditional hymn tunes perfectly inhabit the meditative ethos of our service of Celtic Evensong.

Compline

Annabel Rooney is a Cambridge-trained cellist, music scholar, and composer of choral music. Rooney delicately sets William Romanis’ 1878 hymn text “Round me falls the night” with luminous harmonies and unexpected shifts of tonal center. The hushed verses serve as a soft evening prayer, reaching for the gentle radiance of divine light from the shrouded hours of nighttime darkness.

— Notes by Diana Chou and Brent te Velde