

ARLINGTON STREET CHURCH MUSICIANS

Mark David Buckles, conductor
Nicholas Place, pianist

Bluegrass Band

Julie Metcalf, fiddle
David Hollender, banjo
Steve Roy, mandolin
Jim Muller, guitar
Sharon Horovitch, bass

Sopranos

Eve Lauria
Gaby Whitehouse
Julie Gregorio
Karen Tausch
Tori Bell
Zoe Arguello

Altos

Betsy Shearer
E.B. Fouts
Emily Jaworski
Jaimie Dingus
Jeanne Monaghan
Joanna Lubkin
Teresa Herbert

Tenors

Daniel Rosensweig
Reese Millican
Trey Campbell

Basses

Dan Ivey
George Whitehouse
Jim Tice
Justin Hicks
Richard Marshall



A NOTE FROM THE CONDUCTOR

In *The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass*, composer Carol Barnett brings, in her words, “the solemnity of the classical choir-based mass together with the down-home sparkle of bluegrass.” The 2007 cantata is scored for choir and soloists paired with a traditional bluegrass instrumentation of fiddle, mandolin, guitar, banjo, and bass.

Barnett adds that that piece allowed her “the chance to write cheery sacred music — all too rare in a medium rife with staid and even lugubrious settings. And it’s brought me back to memories of music heard while visiting my grandparents, country music with a church flavor that told stories and came out of a scratchy old record player. Grandma would not have allowed dancing, but under the table I tapped my toes.”

Barnett partnered with poet, novelist, and librettist Marisha Chamberlain, who has created a libretto filled with profound theology.

Chamberlain writes, “Bluegrass is more than a sound. The lyrics of so many bluegrass songs display an unpretentious, earthy philosophy that is easy to sing and easy to understand: Adam lives just up the street and Eve’s the girl next door. Love is the major theme — frustrated yearning love, secret, satisfied love, or boldly proclaimed love. And although romantic love between two people is huge in bluegrass, so is love of God, the Gospel tradition. ‘In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us,’ says John in the Gospel, which launches our Bluegrass Mass as an immediate story of love between Creator and creation.”

Structurally, the piece alternates between “ballads” (in which the story of God’s love reads like a country song) and the traditional elements of the Catholic Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Credo, and Agnus Dei.

Some of these traditional movements remain in the original Latin and Greek: Kyrie (Lord have mercy; Christ have mercy), Sanctus (Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory, Hosanna in the highest), and the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, grant us peace). The Gloria and the Credo (belief statement) are recast with new words (and a new theology, too) by Chamberlain.

In the Ballad portions of the piece, there is a refrain that “they say God loved the world so dear, He cast aside his crown and cloaked Himself in human shape.” The piece both begins and ends with a solo a cappella voice singing these words (and at the close of the piece, God’s gender is recast as female, something Arlington Street Church will no doubt appreciate).

This love story meets a stumbling block in the eighth movement when we encounter the problem of suffering in the world. After an impassioned portrayal of fires, floods, war, and displacement that comes as close as the piece has to a Dies Irae (Day of Wrath), the poet asks “Where are you now, our Savior dear, when we are all undone?” For the answer, the poetry shifts stunningly to first person and present tense. The choir sings “It’s true I love the world so dear I cast aside my crown and cloak myself in mystery so I can come on down and dwell in and among you now.” For me, and perhaps many Unitarian Universalists, this speaks to theology affirming that we are the very incarnations of God that we seek and will be saved by no hands but our own.

Echoing this theology, the Gloria concludes “Oh, Glory be the generous Hand who left us to our work, and care, who gave us only few commands but that we help each other bear life’s burdens, pain and suffering ease.” Here are shades of the famous Micah 6:8 (“What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God”), upon which Arlington Street Church’s recessional “When You Walk from Here” is based. The service does begin when the service ends.

But perhaps the final line of the Credo says the simple words that we all most need to hear and remember: “Row on, row on, and no one goes alone.”

- Mark David Buckles



ARLINGTON
STREET CHURCH
Unitarian Universalist

SUNDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2016
THE WORLD BELOVED: A BLUEGRASS MASS
BY CAROL BARNETT



Watercolor of Tiffany Window by Frederick Wilson, 1905

Arlington Street Church
Boston, Massachusetts
Founded in 1729

Gathered in love and service for justice and peace

Arlington Street Church, Unitarian Universalist

SUNDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2016

THE WORLD BELOVED: A BLUEGRASS MASS

libretto by Marisha Chamberlain

(In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us ... John 4:7-21)

I. BALLAD: REFRAIN

They say God loved the world so dear
He set aside His crown
And cloaked Himself in human shape;
They say that He came down,
And dwelt awhile among us here.
He came on down.

II. KYRIE

Mercy!
Oh, Kyrie! Have mercy! Oh, Christe!
Mercy, Oh mercy, eleison, eleison.
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison
Kyrie eleison, have mercy on creation!
Christe eleison, have mercy on our souls!

III. BALLAD: FIRST VERSE

A child walked forth on Eden's way,
A child stretched out her hand.
O, may I taste the apple tree
And take to understand
The fruit of knowledge in my mouth,
And know of God firsthand?

IV. GLORIA

Glory be to God on high,
Who launched the sunlight, loosed the rain,
Who scattered stars across the sky,
Who piled the mountains, rolled the plains,
Who spilled the rivers and the seas.
Oh Glory be, oh Glory be.

Glory be to God below,
For feather, fur, for scale and fin,
For vine upturning, blossom's fire,
For muscle, sinew, nerve and skin
And every feature set aglow
Oh, Glory be to God below.

Oh Glory be for peace on earth,
And prayerful be the human heart
That has required a Savior's birth
To make of earth heav'ns counterpart,
So strife might stop and warring cease.
Oh, Glory be for peace, oh, be for peace.

Oh, Glory be the generous hand
Who left us to our work, and care,
Who gave us only few commands
But that we help each other bear
Life's burdens. Pain and suffering ease.
Oh, Glory be, oh, Glory be.

V. BALLAD: SECOND VERSE AND REFRAIN

Adam, he labored, Eve, she toiled,
And many children bore,
And sometimes all was fruitfulness
And sometimes seasons wore
Them down to dust and emptiness
And hunger at the door.

But they said God loved the world so dear
He set aside His crown
And cloaked Himself in human shape;
They say the He came down,
And dwelt awhile among us here.
He came on down.

VI. CREDO

Oh, I do believe a place awaits us
far across the Jordan
And when we reach those mossy banks
we'll cast aside our oars.
Row on, row on, we're crossing River Jordan.
Row on, and no one goes alone.

Oh, I do believe a place awaits us
high above the mountains
And when we reach that highest peak,
we'll spread our wings and soar.
Climb on, climb on,
we're climbing Jacob's ladder
Climb on, climb on, and no one goes alone.

Oh, I do believe a resting place awaits us,
'cross the Jordan.
We'll toss our coats, throw off our hats
and take the seat of ease.
And it's not the seat of riches
and it's not the seat of power,
Row on, row on, and no one goes alone.

VII. SANCTUS

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.
Dominus Deus Sabaoth;
Pleni sunt coeli et terra Gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

VIII. BALLAD: THIRD & FOURTH VERSES AND REFRAIN

The skies exploded, towers fell;
The floods came rushing down
And many souls were burned alive
And many souls were drowned
And others set to marching, marching

Far from house and home.
Where are you now, our Savior dear,
When we are all undone?

They said God loved the world so dear
He set aside His crown
And cloaked Himself in human shape;
They say the He came down,
And dwelt awhile among us here.
He came on down.

Oh, I am here among you now
Tho' I must pass unseen,
And cannot show why this must be
Nor how I walk between
Your souls and greater dangers
Than you have ever know,
To laugh with you and weep with you,
My people, oh my own.

It's true, I love the world so dear
I cast aside My crown
And cloak Myself in mystery
So I can come on down
And dwell in and among you now,
I come on down.

IX. AGNUS DEI

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
Dona nobis pacem.

X. INSTRUMENTAL INTERLUDE: ART THOU WEARY?

XI. BENEDICTION

Blessings be upon your heads.
Bless the living, bless the dead.
Blessings be upon you, my people.

Blessing so that you may go
Lightly through this world of woe.
Blessing be upon you, my people.

Blessings, and may you embrace
God in guise of human grace.
Blessings now and forever.

XII. CONCLUSION

They say God loved the world so dear
She set aside Her crown
And cloaked Herself in human shape;
They say that She came down,
And dwelt awhile among us here.
She came on down.