## JOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE

AND SINFONIA OF LOS ANGELES

JOHN CURRIE · MUSIC DIRECTOR

2<sup>th</sup> SEASON

ROGER WAGNER, FOUNDER AND MUSIC DIRECTOR LAUREATE

SATURDAY, March 2, 1991 at 8:00 P.M.

CURTAIN RAISER PREVIEW at 7:00 P.M.

with JOSEPH NAGY

DOROTHY CHANDLER PAVILION

# Voices of Today

JOHN CURRIE.

STUART CANIN, SUSAN MONTGOMERY, PAULA RASMUSSEN, JOHN MITCHINSON, KEVIN BELL, Conductor

Concertmaster Soprano Mezzo Soprano Tenor Baritone

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY

(1882 - 1967)

PSALMUS HUNGARICUS OP. 13

STEPHEN PAULUS (b. 1949)

VOICES (West Coast Premiere)

INTERMISSION

ANTON BRUCKNER (1824-1896)

TE DEUM

The audience is cordially invited to a post concert reception in the Grand Hall to meet John Currie, the Artists, and members of the Chorale and Sinfonia.

Reception mineral water graciously donated by San Pellegrino.

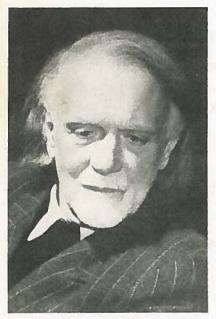
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### · JOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE-

#### CONDUCTOR'S NOTES by JOHN CURRIE

The Hebrew Psalms are great poetry, powerfully influencing countless generations since their composition by King David and others. But their diction is not genteel and their subject matter is not limited to the pastoral and the picturesque. Blood, treachery, terror, hatred, politics, and the poet's struggle with a jealous god are their stuff. Thus the Hungarian, Kodály, a devotee of early twentieth-century nationalism, made passionate vent in the violent text of Psalm 55 in Michael Vég's poetic version. The occasion was a celebration, on November 19th,



Zoltán Kodály

1923, of the City of Budapest's 50th birthday. (See the accompanying historical notes.)

But Kodály did not celebrate. Instead, he poured out a wonderfully crafted song of lament and anger. David is oppressed with sorrow and terror and cries to his god for the destruction of his enemies. The work's contemporary relevance, and the turbulent history of Hungary are burned into the score. More than this, Kodály created a masterpiece which immediately surpassed its local significance and became a standard twentieth-century choral and orchestral masterpiece. For me, it stands with Walton's Belshazzar's Feast (again, an old Hebrew shout) as a great choral and orchestral poem.

Kodály frames the poet's cry with a unison, folk-like chant which is the main theme and recurrent refrain of the work. "Sad was King David, sore and afflicted . . ." The heldentenor (such a voice is

..." The heldentenor (such a voice is necessary) takes up the poem in the character of David, calling on his god to lift him from his depression and destroy his enemies. At one climactic point Kodály leaves the solo voice unaccompanied for the shattering words "Keserü halál" (Bitter death to them!)

Chorally and orchestrally the work has rich and romantic textures, and the poem's violent outbursts are expressed in tempi that never sit still. The work is strongly structured, but defies formal categorisation. Words like "rhapsody" and "tone-poem" come to mind.

Towards the end, an uneasy resolution is reached in a beautiful orchestral passage (strings, solo clarinet and violin) followed by a strong choral declaration of faith in the one god and the pious hope that he will support the righteous.

Bruckner's large-scale romantic symphonies are supplemented and crowned by his settings of the Mass, the 150th Psalm, and, above all, his acclaimed *Te Deum*. Set for large orchestra, chorus and four soloists (with the tenor dominating), the *Te Deum* quotes from his Seventh Symphony. This theme, heard just before the final double fugue ("In te . . . non confundar") was associated in Bruckner's mind with news of the death of his hero, Wagner. Bruckner also intended to quote the opening of the *Te Deum* in the *Ninth Symphony* he never finished.

Those who have come to love this composer's music as well as those who are new to his style should note that this is vintage Bruckner. The "barbaric" pounding ostinato figures (the very opening of the work), the melting, reflective choral phrases at the ends of paragraphs, and the climactic unaccompanied choral declamations are all Brucknerian finger-prints.

The opening dramatises the old plainchant *Te Deum* theme, introducing the "angelic" phrases of the soloists, then returning to the massive and majestic from "Sanctus" onwards. The music melts for "Virginis uterum" (the Virgin's womb) and "mortis aculeo" (death's needle) before the first section's grand ending.

The second movement is a brief tenor solo with choral and orchestral comments. The tenor prays while the chorus speaks

of redemption. "Aeterna fac," the third movement returns to typical pounding rhythms.

"Salvum fac populum" starts in penitence, but breaks back to a triumphant C-major at "Per singulos," before a peaceful, wonderfully flexible choral ending "... speravimus in te" (... we hope in Thee).

The fifth, and final movement is ushered in by the solo vocal quartet. The chorus majestically confirms their "non confundar" (the Seventh Symphony theme) and takes up these words in a double fugue ending in a final C-major blaze of glory.

Later in life, as the century was closing, Bruckner said: "When God calls me to himself one day, and asks what I have done with the talent He gave me, I will show Him the score of my *Te Deum* and he will surely judge me mercifully."

#### A NOTE ON VOICES (West Coast Premiere)

VOICES is the last of four works written by Stephen Paulus for the Minnesota Orchestra across the span of the four seasons he served as composer in residence, and was commissioned jointly by the Minnesota Orchestra and COMISS (the Congress on Ministry in Specialized Settings). Completed in 1988, the work is inscribed "To Jim Anderson" who spearheaded the idea of the commission, and who died suddenly before its completion and premiere.

The search for a text culminated in the works of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), especially Die Stimmen. There Paulus found the voices of need as well as a dimension of the mysterious. "I have always liked Rilke's poetry," says Paulus — "his language, his vision, and the way his verses portray vivid characters, just as in opera. His portrait of a drunkard is pathetic, but powerful." In 1988, translator Albert Flemming wrote to Paulus: "Of all the poems I chose to translate, none speaks so directly for the needs of the disadvantaged, for the needy, for the street people, for the suicidal: for 'the drunkard,' read 'the drug addict;' for 'the leper,' read 'the AIDS victim' . . . It is as if Rilke had written them (in 1906) prophetically foreseeing the human disasters of the twentieth century's ending. And his message embraces all mankind."

OPENING, spurred by the choral procla-

mation of a forceful E-major chord over a powerful pedal point in C in the orchestral bass, establishes the premise: "The rich do well to keep silent . . ." Male voices continue with intensity over a disturbing figuration, "But those in need must reveal themselves." With the reminder that we try to pass by the needy, the orchestra delivers a signature theme. and angry motive, almost like a slap to shake us into awareness. Sounds of the mob pervade the end of the movement. whereupon the individual voices of the suffering come into focus: the beggar, the drunkard, and the suicide, their stories following each other without a break. The mood changes with The Sona Of The Idiot, like a demented scherzo, sparingly orchestrated, while The Song Of The Leper emphasises the blare of brass and rasp of unpitched percussion.

A significant pause clears the raging sounds and cleanses the emotional palette. Forming the second part of the work, based on selected Rilke poems, the concluding three movements gradually introduce hopefulness. The solo mezzo voice of "I am, O Anxious One" signals the turning point, reflecting tenderly at first, but gradually surging with emotional strength, for the idea behind this music is that feeling is the essence of humankind. Initiated by the bright beam of female voices As once the winged energy of delight gives substance to the idea. The words "For the god wants to know himself in you" are emphasized by unison voices released in a massive cluster chord, molto crescendo.

Beginning in mysterious tones, the concluding movement, from which the entire work takes its title, contains shades of darkness of the first six settings. But it sweeps to a radiant conclusion, engaging the entire orchestra with the voices in its spirit of celebration.

(The above notes are edited from an article in *Showcase* November 1988, supplied by the composer.)

HISTORICAL NOTES BY Richard H. Trame, S.J., Ph.D.

After the signing of the Treaty of Trianon at the close of World War I, Hungary as one of the defeated Central Powers, emerged an impoverished nation, a fragment of the former Austro-Hungarian Dual monarchy, with a population reduced

from twenty to seven million. Forbidden to acknowledge the claims of the Habsburg Emperor Charles, the nation became a semi-dictatorship until 1944 under the Regency of Admiral Horthy. Like contemporary Germany, Hungary faced serious economic and social problems resulting from its depreciated currency. By 1923 the nation had reached the nadir of its fortunes.

The celebration in 1923 of the fiftieth anniversary of the union of the twin cities of the Danube, Buda and Pesth offered that great trio of Hungarian composers, Dohnanyi, Bartók, and Kodály an opportunity to display to the world Hungary's then vibrant musical life. Each composer was asked to contribute a work to the event. Dohnanyi produced an overture based on the National Anthem and a choral *Credo*; Bartók a *Dance suite*, and Zoltán Kodály a masterpiece of 20th Century choral literature, the *Psalmus Hungaricus*, Psalm 55.

Casting about in his memory for a suitable text, he recalled a poet of his youth, the 16th Century Michael Vég who came from Kodály's own birth-place Kecshemet. Vég, living during the Turkish occupation of Hungary, was one of a group of native poets who professed their patriotism and Christianity in powerful and moving verse redolent of the Old Testament prophets. Kodály's study of the Psalm text as interpolated and expanded by Vég's poetry furnished him with that intense religious feeling in which he could universalize the tragic elements of Hungary's history.

After the first performance on November 19, 1923, conducted by Dohnanyi, the critics were unanimous in their praise of the *Psalmus*. One wrote that Kodaly "rises to those pure and refined heights of music which are only to be assessed by the standards of a master like Bach." They further described the *Psalmus* as "a work of fascinating depths of emotion, written by a soaring imagination that leaves one both awed and spell-bound." Another critic declared that "it is perhaps, the most accomplished masterpiece ever to have been achieved by a Hungarian composer."

A. V. Toth in his lengthy preface to the published score writes: "Kodály's musical setting exhausts both the national and subjective elements of the poem and molds them into one perfect and homogeneous unit of great visionary beauty, and of

tremendous lyric and dramatic strength."

Anton Bruckner presents to his beholders a seemingly contradictory and puzzling personality. This simple, unassuming, profoundly religious man of peasant origins, retiring and deeply wounded by his vociferously strident contemporary critics has emerged as one of music's most glowing and expansive Romantics. His huge works are characterized by depth of emotion and superb orchestral and choral color.

He commenced his setting of the great thanksgiving hymn *Te Deum* in 1881 after completing the *F Minor Mass* and while working on the poignant *Sixth Symphony*. Upon its completion he dedicated



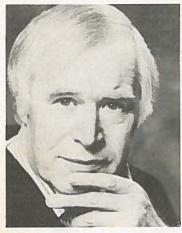
Anton Bruckner

it with a somewhat whimsical sense of triumph "to the dear Lord, because my persecutors have not yet finished me off."

Gustav Mahler crossed off his copy of Bruckner's *Te Deum* the listed technical components and forces of the score and wrote, "scored, rather for the tongues of angels, God-seekers, tormented hearts, and souls purified in the fire."

Max Auer, Bruckner's biographer, summed up the composer's religious spirit in the *Te Deum*. Bruckner "took literally the words of the Psalmist 'Praise him with drums and cymbals.' He displays a splendor and brilliance in his orchestral and choral compositions which are comparable to the glow of the glorious colors of a Rubens' painting."

## About the Artists



JOHN CURRIE, conductor, was born in Scotland and first studied conducting at the Royal Academy of Music where he gained many awards. Since then his work with choruses and orchestras has become internationally recognized.

He has appeared as guest conductor with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Scarlatti Orchestra of Naples, the Jerusalem Symphony, the Israel Sinfonietta, the National Orchestra of Belgium, and the Scottish National Orchestra. Very recent foreign appearances have included a public concert and broadcast as guest conductor of the B.B.C. Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

Previously he had won a high reputation as a chorusmaster, working with Giulini, Mehta, Abbado, Muti, Barenboim, and Solti, with orchestras ranging from the Israel Philharmonic to the Chicago Symphony. He has been Chorusmaster of the Edinburgh Festival Chorus and the Scottish National Orchestra Chorus, as well as Chorus Director and Musical Associate at Scottish Opera. In 1968 he founded the John Currie Singers and Orchestra, with whom he conducted many world premieres. Then, in 1981 he founded the Scottish Chorus which appeared in Belgium, Israel, and Italy, including La Scala.

In opera he has conducted *Dido And Aeneas*, *Savitri*, *Orfeo* (all with Dame Janet Baker in the title roles) and many Mozart operas, including *Idomeneo*. Recently, in the unique early theatre in

Perth, Scotland, Mr. Currie completed the cycle of the three Mozart 'Da Ponte' operas. These new productions, staged and conducted by Mr. Currie, have received critical acclaim, and Mr. Currie has been invited to continue them annually, commencing with *The Magic Flute* in 1991.



STUART CANIN, concertmaster, was concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony from 1970 to 1980. He was born in New York City where he studied the violin with famed pedagogue Ivan Galamian.

In 1959 he was the winner of the highly coveted First Prize of the Paganini International Violin Competition in Genoa, Italy. He has been honored by his native city, New York, with its highest cultural award, the Handel Medal, in recognition of his musical achievements.

As concert master of the San Francisco Symphony under Seiji Ozawa, Canin was featured as soloist with the orchestra on numerous occasions, including concerts in Moscow, Leningrad, Berlin, and Tokyo. As a recitalist and as soloist with other major European and American orchestras, Canin has concertized extensively throughout the two continents.

Before joining the San Francisco Symphony, Canin was concertmaster and violin soloist of the Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia.

For many years, Canin was a chamber music artist with the Aspen Music Festival in Colorado. In addition, he has participated in the Spoleto Festivals in Spoleto, Italy, and Charleston, S.C., and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival.

He has served as professor of violin at prestigious conservatories in this country and abroad, among them the Berlin Conservatory and the Musikhochschule in Freiberg, Germany.

At present he pursues an active concert career as well as being on the faculty of the University of California at Santa Barbara. He is also a member of the Artist Faculty of the Summer Music Festival of the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, California.

Mr. Canin recently returned from the People's Republic of China where, as a guest of the Chinese government, he gave Master Classes to young Chinese violin students at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. While in Shanghai, Mr. Canin performed as soloist with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra.



STEPHEN PAULUS has been Composer-in-Residence with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra since September of 1988. In this capacity, he has worked with both Music Director, Yoel Levi and Conductor Laureate, Robert Shaw. In addition to his sixteen works for orchestra, he has also written extensively for chamber ensemble, solo voice and has four operas to his credit. His second opera, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, was the first American opera

production to be presented at the Edinburgh Festival in 1983. This season his works will receive performances throughout the United States and abroad.

Mr. Paulus has been a resident composer at the Tanglewood Festival, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and the Oregon Bach Festival. He is a recipient of both National Endowment for the Arts and Guggenheim Fellowships. His Violin Concerto, written for the former Altanta Symphony Orchestra concert master, William Preucil won Third Prize in the Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards in 1988. In addition to co-founding the Minnesota Composers Forum in 1973, he also served four years as Composer-in Residence with the Minnesota Orchestra working with Sir Neville Marriner. Mr. Paulus is also on the Board of Directors of ASCAP.

Mr. Paulus's current commissions include a *Trumpet Concerto* for Doc Severinsen and the Phoenix Symphony, a *Double Concerto* for violin, cello and orchestra for the 150th Anniversary of the New York Philharmonic, a *Violin Concerto* for Robert McDuffie and the Aspen Festival Orchestra and a new work for the Atlanta Symphony. He is also commissioned to write a work for the Saturday Brass Quintet — winners of the 1990 Naumburg Chamber Award and a work for narrator and chamber orchestra with Janet Bookspan as narrator with the Atlantic Sinfonietta.

Mr. Paulus has recorded many of his compositions including: Violin Concerto, Concertante, The Symphony For Strings, with conductors Yoel Levi and Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony, Symphony For Strings with Sir Neville Marriner and the Minnesota Orchestra. His most recent release is a recording of Songs—three song cycles written for Soprano, Tenor and Baritone.!

SUSAN MONTGOMERY, soprano, has performed as soloist with the Master Chorale in their annual Messiah Sing-Along concerts, Mozart Requiem and in February was heard in an outstanding performance of Haydn's Nelson Mass. She has been an active member of the Chorale for four years. Ms. Montgomery received her Master of Music degree last year from California State University, Fullerton, where she enrolled after winning a scholarship from the Metropolitan Opera Association. In addition to leading roles



in University productions, she has performed with the Los Angeles Music Center Opera and Opera Pacific in productions of Otello, Tosca, Le Nozze Di Figaro, La Bohème, and The Telephone. As a concert artist, Ms. Montgomery has performed with the William Hall Chorale, the Los Angeles Bach Festival and the Corona Del Mar Baroque Festival. She just completed her fifth season with the Carmel Bach Festival where she sang the role of Euridice in Monteverdi's Orfeo. Ms. Montgomery recently premiered the role of Lavinia in the showcase presentation of a new musical entitled About The House with A.C.T. in San Francisco.



PAULA RASMUSSEN, mezzo-soprano, appeared in the 1990 Messiah Sing-Alongs under the baton of Maestro John Currie. In January 1990 she was a guest soloist with the Master Chorale in a concert of Haydn Paukenmesse, and Pergolesi's Magnificat. Ms. Rasmussen has also performed with the Los Angeles Music Center Opera, Euterpe Opera, USC Opera, and the Pasadena Pro Musica. Last summer she

portrayed Nancy Tang in Nixon in China directed by Peter Sellars for the Los Angeles Music Center Opera, and Lola in Cavalleria Rusticana at Long Beach Opera. She recently attended the Merola Opera Program in San Francisco where she worked with such artists as Regine Crespin and Antonio Tonini. In San Francisco she performed in Lucia di Lammermoor as well as the Grand Finals concert. conducted by Patrick Summers with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. Ms. Rasmussen was recently presented in a benefit concert for the Opera Buff's Association where she was introduced as one of the promising young artists of the year. Her many awards include first place in the Etude Scholarship Competition and grand prize in the Pasadena Opera Guild. In November, she was a prize winner in the Metropolitan Opera Regional Finals.



JOHN MITCHINSON, tenor, studied singing at the Royal Manchester College of Music in England under Frederic Cox and Heddle Nash. After completing his formal training, he launched his career as a concert artist, performing with all the major orchestras and choral societies in Great Britain, appearing frequently on radio and television, and touring abroad. Mr. Mitchinson has performed under the batons of Sir Adrian Boult, Pablo Casals. Antal Dorati, Carlo Maria Giulini and Simon Rattle. He has recorded extensively with Ernst Ansermet, Leonard Bernstein, Pierre Boulez, Sir Colin Davis and Sir Charles Mackerras, performing the Mahler 8th Symphony, Das Lied von der Erde, Beatrice et Benedict, Glagolitic Mass, Dream of Gerontius, Renard, Lelio, and Messe per quattri Voci. On the operatic

## · JOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE-

stage he has been heard in the roles of Dalibor, Peter Grimes, Idomeneo, Manolios in Greek Passion, Luca in House of the Dead, and Tristan in Tristan und Isolde, which he recorded with Sir Charles Mackerras. In November 1987, Mr. Mitchinson won critical acclaim for his performance of Gerontius in the Los Angeles Master Chorale's West Coast premiere performance of Elgar's The Dream of Gerontius under the baton of Maestro John Currie. He made his Los Angeles Philharmonic debut in November 1988 in Janáček's Glagolitic Mass with the Los Angeles Master Chorale under Simon Rattle. Last year Mr. Mitchinson appeared as soloist in Toronto, Sweden, Dublin/Cork, the Berlin Festival, Royal Albert Hall, and Festival Hall in London. He is a member of the staff at the School of Vocal Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music.

KEVIN BELL, bass, made his debut with Maestro John Currie in the 1990 Messiah Sing-alongs at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Last year he was one of the Metropolitan Opera Association's National Finalists. He was also the 1990 Second Place Winner of the Liederkranz Opera Competition in New York, and is a 1991 Winner of the Sullivan Musical Foundation award. In December he made his debut at the Kennedy Center with Washington Opera in Mozart's Magic Flute and will return next Fall as the Friar in Don Carlo. Next year he will make his



first appearance with the San Diego Opera as the Police Commissioner in *Der Rosenkavalier*. He will appear with the Marin Opera in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* and later in the year appear as Colline in *La Bohème*. Mr. Bell resides in Moreno Valley, CA, with his wife and three children.

The LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE AND SINFONIA has played a unique role in the cultural life of Los Angeles for a quarter of a century. A resident company of the Music Center, it is the only professional chorus in the United States which has both its own series and serves as the resident chorus for other performing arts organizations, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and the Los Angeles Music Center Opera.

At the close of the Chorale's 1988-89

season, it gave its 500th performance with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and over 200 in its own series. During the past two seasons with the Music Center Opera Company, the ensemble has performed in Tosca, The Marriage of Figaro, Falstaff, Don Carlo, Fidelio, and Idomeneo.

Conductor Roger Wagner founded the Master Chorale in 1964 with the support of the Los Angeles Junior Chamber of Commerce and local businessmen Z. Wayne Griffin and Louis Dee Statham. In January, 1965, the Master Chorale singing Bach's *B Minor Mass*, first filled the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Since then the 135-member ensemble has performed throughout the United States, in Europe and in the Soviet Union.

In 1986, John Currie of Edinburgh, Scotland became the Chorale's second Music Director. Mr. Currie is currently in his fifth season with the Chorale, and since his arrival in 1986, has conducted the Chorale and Sinfonia in acclaimed performances of many major works, and has collaborated with distinguished conductors for the Chorale's appearances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and at the Hollywood Bowl.

Mr. Currie completes his five-year tenure as Music Director at the end of this season. Paul Salamunovich of Los Angeles, Music Director Designate, will become the Master Chorale's third director in the 1991-1992 season.



Los Angeles Master Chorale and Sinfonia

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On behalf of the Los Angeles Master Chorale Associates, I want to extend a sincere welcome to you and hope that you enjoy the concert as much as we enjoy helping bring it to you.

The Associates is an organization dedicated to furthering the enjoyment of hearing great choral music. We feel that the more a person knows about the Chorale, the music, the singers, the orchestra and the conductor, the more one will enjoy the concerts. To this end, the Associates sponsors, for its members, pre-concert dinners and special parties where the Associates' members and the performers can gather in a social setting.

In addition to the social aspects, the Associates offer support to the Chorale by helping in the office, at concerts and rehearsals, and with various special projects. One very special project that we are exceptionally proud of is the LAMC High School Choir Festival where young singers get the opportunity to sing under the direction of Maestro John Currie.

Please join us at the post-concert reception and look for our table in the Grand Hall on the second floor. If you miss us there, give us a call at (213) 972-7282. We would love to have you join our group. Enjoy the concert and thank you for attending.

Sincerely yours,

William A. Mann, President Los Angeles Master Chorale Associates

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