

Notes for Choosing a Polyphonic Choir

Cecilia Nam: Beginning Polyphony. This choir is designed to introduce and improve on the critical vocal and musical techniques necessary for singing polyphonic music. Singers will learn how to carry a part on their own, independent of other sections, and without accompaniment. Members of this choir will learn rhythm, pitch, and vocal production. The choir is designed for novice singers who would not yet benefit from a more advanced choir but it might also be useful for directors to see how a master goes about teaching inexperienced singers to make beautiful music. Two pieces are also part of this choir's agenda: *Cantate Domino* by Pitoni, and *If Ye Love Me* by Thomas Tallis. This choir will sing at Mass on Saturday.

Kurt Poterack. The major piece that this choir under Poterack's direction will sing is the *Missa Brevis* by Palestrina. There are few pieces in the Renaissance repertoire of Mass settings that has produced such consistently pleasing results. It might be considered one of the easier pieces among Palestrina's Masses and yet it is amenable to subtle vocal effects and tonal shaping. Its title suggests that it is shorter than it really is, but the tonal center is consistent throughout, making it a comfortable Mass for singers who are not prepared for more advanced material. This choir will also sing motets by Byrd and Bruckner. This choir's main Mass is on Thursday.

William Mahrt. For the third year, Mahrt will present a highly unusual and spectacular rendering of polyphonic Vespers, the likes of which most Americans have never experienced as worshippers, much less as singers. This year the focus will be Roman, based on the music of Palestrina. The format alternates between chant and polyphony and requires singers with confidence at frequent and exposed stops and starts. This choir provides a rich education in liturgical history as well as performance experience that will take the singer to the next level. The choir will also sing motets by Taverner and Rivaflécha. The Vespers takes place on Friday evening.

Wilko Brouwers. William Byrd is widely considered to be the most sophisticated composer before the age of Bach, and this choir will explore some of his most spectacular music. The choir will be the only one in the Colloquium that will sing polyphonic versions of the propers of the Mass. This is the first time that the Colloquium has taken this direction in its 20-year history, and the repertoire by Byrd is particularly notable. The music was written for a Church in hiding while Byrd worked as Queen Elizabeth's court composer and, hence, the music from his book of Gradualia had to be circulated in secret. They are unforgettable masterpieces of musical genius that prove highly appropriate in their intended context of the Catholic Mass. This choir will sing its main work on Saturday.

Horst Buchholz. Among the most famous of all the late Viennese orchestral Masses are those by Franz Schubert. His Mass in G is considered a masterpiece of melody. This choir will sing from specially prepared editions with textual adjustments made necessary for Catholic liturgical purposes. An orchestra and organ will accompany this Mass. The

style and approach depart from the Renaissance style that is the staple of the Colloquium experience, but it is what might be called an organic development centered on the musical delights we associate with all of Schubert's work. It calls on talents that are different from those required of Renaissance music, and its presentation here is a way of affirming its important role in the history of the development of liturgical music. This choir will also sing motets from Guerrero and Lasso. The Shubert Mass will be featured on Sunday.