

Presented by Lincoln Chapter, American Guild of Organists
– A MYRON J. ROBERTS RETROSPECTIVE –
Church of the Holy Trinity, Episcopal
6001 A Street – Lincoln, Nebraska
October 18, 2008 – 3:00 PM
Michael H. Veak, Past Dean, *Emcee*

[A Welcome from Mother Catherine, Interim Rector)

Good afternoon and welcome to our concert – we are pleased that you came to share in "The Works of Myron J. Roberts." Let me introduce Dr. George Ritchie, "Honorary Life Member" and Past Dean of the Lincoln Chapter AGO, and Professor of Organ, Emeritus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, for some opening remarks.

[OPENING REMARKS: GEORGE RITCHIE]

You will note on pages 2-3 of your program, that Mr. Roberts was a very busy person, writing many compositions. With many thanks to Dr. Anthony Antolini, a personal friend of Mr. Roberts' in Maine, we have a treasurer trove of many unpublished manuscripts. Many of these manuscripts are on display today in the entrance foyer and will become a part of the permanent collection of the Myron Roberts archives at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Love Library.

Included with the manuscripts that Dr. Antolini sent to us, were several typewritten lists of compositions and the years they were composed. At the bottom of one of the lists, in

typical Myron Roberts style, he wrote . . . "All of the above are early works and I feel 'out of touch' with them – as if someone else had written the notes. None will be submitted by me for publication; they should remain in manuscript."

Our first piece on today's concert, *Homage to Perotin*, was published in 1988, a revision of the 1956 original. In an interview for *The American Organist*, the official magazine of the American Guild of Organists, Mr. Roberts indicated that the piece was one of his favorites. Perotin was a French composer who lived from 1160 - 1240 in Paris, the most highly acclaimed musical figure of the High Gothic period. Mr. Roberts wrote this piece for an organ recital that he played in June 1954 at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Amiens, France.

Gene Bedient, President of the Bedient Pipe Organ Company, and a former student and personal friend of Myron Roberts, is the first to perform on today's concert.

[HOMAGE TO PEROTIN]

Alleluia was first written in 1968 for a concert, "A Tribute to the Works of Myron Roberts," that I was giving at the Cathedral of the Risen Christ. Later published in 1977, the SATB choral work is dedicated to John Moran, Michael Veak, and the Choir, Cathedral of the Risen Christ, Lincoln. 1968 is also the year that Mr. Roberts was named Foundation Professor of Organ by

the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

We appreciate the singers in today's choir that are from the churches Mr. Roberts served while in Lincoln: First-Plymouth Congregational, Church of the Holy Trinity, and the Cathedral of the Risen Christ, and additional singers who are friends and members of the Lincoln Chapter AGO, and former organ students.

The director of the first choral piece on our concert today is Jack Cole. He first joined the AGO chapter in 1950. Jack is a retired vocal music director, having taught at Lincoln Southeast High School for years and also in Detroit, Michigan, before retiring here in Lincoln. Currently he directs the Senior Chorus of Lincoln and is in the First Presbyterian Choir. And now with accompanist, Nancy Anderson, here is *Alleluia*.

[ALLELUIA]

You may have noticed in the listing of compositions on pages 2 and 3 of today's program, the word Tucket in the title of several pieces. "Tuckets" is a term used by 18th-century English composers to describe a little piece in fanfare form.

Of course the next piece, *In Memoriam*, is anything but a tucket in fanfare style, with the serenity of the piece describing the title, exactly. *In Memoriam* is one of Mr. Roberts' earlier-published organ works, published in 1949.

Nancy Anderson, a third grade teacher at Kahoa Elementary

School, Lincoln, is in her 28th year as organist and director of three children's choirs (two singing choirs and one ringing choir) at Waverly Methodist Church.

[IN MEMORIAM]

In the 1964-1965 school year, Mr. Roberts received a research fellowship. His *Improvisation on Agincourt Hymn*, published in 1964, is based on the hymn tune which was a "song of praise" – the proper translation of the Greek, *hymnos* – on the occasion of the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, a decisive victory of the English over the French in the Hundred Years' War. Mr. Roberts thought that the troops likely sang this tune as they marched in to battle.

Typical of Mr. Roberts' humor, here are some program notes, A Glossary of Birds, about the piece, *Pastorale and Aviary*:

- The birds are all imaginary. There is a C Gull – the peculiar quality of the Mother C Gull song has given rise to the popular nickname, Mother of Whistlers, or sometimes even Whistler's Mother.
- There is an unidentified, but probably of the Mocking Bird family, known popularly as the Messy Ann. The Messy Ann forgets its song on occasion and attempts to sing it backwards in order to refresh its memory. It has even been known to do this hanging upside

down, hence the term Inverted Retrograde.

- There is the Coda Bird. This one is "more famous for its feathers than its song." It is a bird with a coda many colors, in a manner of speaking.
- Also in the piece is a cuckoo.
- A letter from Donald Gray at H. W. Gray, who published the piece wrote . . . "Thanks for the new organ piece *Pastorale and Aviary*, which meets with our full approval. The Glossary is something else; I don't think that is even ready for Outer Space . . ."
- So, let's see if you recognize the Messy Ann, the cuckoo and the C gull.

Loretta Love, a retired elementary music educator, and choir director and organist here at Church of the Holy Trinity for the past 24 years, will now perform *Improvisation on Agincourt Hymn* and *Pastorale and Aviary*.

[AGINCOURT HYMN – PASTORALE AND AVIARY]

Myron Roberts' love for astronomy inspired him to write *Nova* which was published in 1973. Nova (or Super-Nova) is the term astronomers use to describe a star which explodes, sending fiery debris billions of miles into space. The Nova is nature's most violent and catastrophic act.

Anyone who had visited the Roberts' in their home at 84th

and A Streets here in Lincoln, perhaps were invited to look through a telescope sitting on a pedestal in their living room. Mr. Roberts had the telescope positioned such that you could see the (then) rotating Phillips 66 gas station sign at Cotner Boulevard and O Streets.

Dr. Charles Ore, a Past Dean of the Lincoln Chapter AGO, a retired professor of music and chair of the music department at Concordia University, Seward, is currently organist at First Presbyterian Church. Charles is a renowned composer in his own right, and now performs *Nova*.

[NOVA]

Holy Trinity, founded on May 10, 1868, was the first Episcopal Church in the City of Lincoln. The church was located on the northeast corner of 12th and J Streets (now Lincoln Mall) until January 19, 1957, when fire destroyed the building. The decision was then made to move to the present location here on A Street, on what was then the eastern edge of the city. The new building was dedicated on May 22, 1960. At the Rector's request following the fire, *O Lord, We Beseech Thee* was written, using the text for the Collect for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

[O LORD, WE BESEECH THEE]

Another early organ work, *Carillon*, published in 1947, is performed today by C. Richard Morris, Director of the Lincoln

Organ Showcase. Dick, a Past Dean of the Lincoln AGO, served the Lincoln churches of First-Plymouth Congregational, Wesley House (now Cornerstone) on the University of Nebraska campus, and Holy Trinity Episcopal, before going on to serve churches in Iowa, Florida, Texas and North Carolina. After Dick's retirement, he and his wife, Nancy, have moved back to Lincoln.

[CARILLON]

We thank NET Radio 91.1 FM for recording today's concert for rebroadcast at a later date.

Prelude and Trumpetings is one of the most widely-performed of Mr. Roberts' organ compositions. It is a staple in organ repertoire.

Once again, we hear from Charles Ore as he performs *Prelude and Trumpetings*, published in 1961.

[PRELUDE AND TRUMPETINGS]

Litany, is dedicated to the Falh family in Amiens, France. Mr. Roberts said this . . .

"During the war, Virginia and I sent Care packages to Europe from time to time. On at least one occasion, the recipient responded with a very lovely letter. This was the Falh family in Amiens, who were deeply appreciative of this kind of help. We responded with letters and quite a correspondence developed. They always wrote in

French and we in English, sometimes we wrote in bad French. When they found out that I was an organist, they got in touch with the organist at the cathedral - Mme. Ponchelle. Ultimately, I corresponded with her. She was a student of Louis Vierne. She invited me to play a program at the Cathedral of Notre Dame at Amiens, and I accepted with great eagerness. It was 1954. I think you could quote the old saying - 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' On that recital, the playing of *Litany* was a memorable experience because the recital was at sundown, and the light coming through those windows was just beyond belief. [Even the very loud chord in the middle of the piece, followed by a very soft section didn't fool the audience into premature applause.] The church was full. There was such poverty in Amiens, that the programs had to be printed by the American Embassy in Paris."

Our next performer, Joy Maag, is a retired elementary general music teacher in the Waverly Schools, and has been organist at Vine Congregational United Church of Christ for the past 28 years. When visiting von Maur department store in South Pointe, one might also hear her playing the piano.

[LITANY]

The Lincoln Chapter of the AGO commissioned Myron Roberts to write a choral piece for a concert given in honor of long-time AGO member, Mary Alice Snider. A result of that commission is the work you are about to hear. While all of our organists and directors are former students of Myron Roberts, the one exception is Jim Lytton, who today represents the Lincoln Chapter AGO, as its Dean. There is a slight change in today's program . . . with Jack Cole recuperating from having pneumonia, Tom Gunther graciously accepted to sing the baritone solo. Thanks, Tom. Now with accompanist Dick Morris, here is *I Will Give Thanks*.

[I WILL GIVE THANKS]

Originally, a 1939 composition, Mr. Roberts made a revision of *Improvisation on God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen* that was published in 1968. The revision of the piece was performed by Dick Morris, in a jointly-sponsored concert of the Lincoln AGO Chapter and the Lincoln Symphony Chorus in December, 1966. Typical of Mr. Roberts, this revision was handed to Dick the day before the concert.

In appreciation for your attending today's Retrospective Concert, we invite you to attend the reception in Courtyard Hall, which you can reach by exiting the back of the nave into the entrance foyer and to your right to the Courtyard Hall. We

wish to thank the church hospitality committee for providing this time of refreshment and conversation. Be sure to take time to look at some of Mr. Roberts' manuscripts and photos of him at various stages in his life.

And, now the return of Dick Morris to perform the final piece on our program.

[GOD REST YOU MERRY, GENTLEMEN]

Committee for the event:

Nancy Miller Anderson
Gene Bedient
Sinda Dux, publicity
Loretta Tubbs Love
Joy Schmidt Maag
C. Richard Morris, chair
Michael H. Veak