

umeri

DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR

*Presents*

# The Lessons, Reflections, & Carols of Christmas

## Prelude

Jennifer Wohlenhaus Bloomberg, oboe

Stephen Dorff, cello

Susan Ihnen, piano and organ

Improvisation on *Greensleeves*

Alfred Fedak

Away in a Manger

William J. Kirkpatrick  
arr. Robert Powell

Wexford Carol

arr. Daniel Kelley

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Richard S. Willis  
arr. David W. Moore

Sicilienne

Maria Theresia von Paradis

Christmas Lullaby

Chip Davis  
arr. Jackson Berkey

Sing Lullaby

Basque carol  
arr. Robert J. Powell



# Rejoice His Heart

A Babe is Born

Daniel Moe  
(1926 - 2012)

**Umeri**

*A babe is born in Bethlehem;  
Therefore rejoice, Jerusalem, hallelujah!*

*He doth within a manger lie,  
Whose throne is set above the sky, hallelujah!*

*Stillness was all the manger round,  
The creature its creator found, hallelujah!*

**Bidding Prayer** - Bishop William Joensen

**Invitatory**

O Come, Emmanuel

Elaine Hagenberg  
(b. 1979)

**Stephen Dorff, cello**  
**Umeri**

*O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.*

*O come, thou Dayspring come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine Advent here,  
And drive away the shades of night,  
And pierce the clouds and bring us light!*

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, Desire of nations,  
bind all people in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease,  
And fill the world with Heaven's peace.*

*(text - metrical paraphrase of the O antiphons from the eighth century)*

**First Lesson** – Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 – Akwaich Chan

Thou Shalt Know Him When He Comes

Hal Hopson  
(b. 1933)

**Umeri**

*Thou shalt know Him when he comes,  
Not by any din of drums,  
Nor His manners, nor His airs,  
Nor by anything He wears.*

*Thou shalt know Him when He comes,  
Not by His crown or by His gown,  
But His coming known shall be,  
By the holy harmony which His coming makes in thee.  
Thou shalt know Him when He comes. Amen  
(anonymous text)*

**Second Lesson** – Isaiah 11:1-4, 6-7 – Antonio Banuelos-Moriel

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree

Elizabeth Poston  
(1905 - 1987)

*The tree of life my soul hath seen,  
Laden with fruit, and always green:  
The trees of nature fruitless be  
Compared with Christ the apple tree.*

*His beauty doth all things excel:  
By faith I know, but ne'er can tell,  
The glory which I now can see  
In Jesus Christ the apple tree.*

*For happiness I long have sought,  
And pleasure dearly I have bought:  
I missed of all; but now I see  
'Tis found in Christ the apple tree.*

*I'm weary with my former toil,  
Here I will sit and rest awhile:  
Under the shadow I will be,  
Of Jesus Christ the apple tree.*

*This fruit doth make my soul to thrive,  
It keeps my dying faith alive;  
Which makes my soul in haste to be  
With Jesus Christ the apple tree.  
(text – anonymous, from the collection of Joshua Smith,  
New Hampshire, 1784)*

**Part 1 -  
O magnum  
mysterium**

## Carol

God Rest You Merry, One and All

English carol, sixteenth century

### Umeri and audience

*God rest you merry, one and all, let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ our Savior was born upon this day,  
To save us all from Satan's power when we were gone astray  
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy;  
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

*Now to the Lord sing praises, all you within this place,  
And with true love and charity each other now embrace;  
This holy tide of Christmas all others shall replace.  
O tidings...*

## Third Lesson – Luke 1:26-35, 38 – Sarah Sullivan Bigelow

Magnificat

Eriks Esenvalds  
(b.1977)

**Allison Vehlewald, mezzo-soprano**

**Umeri**

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
For he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.*

*From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is His name.*

*He has mercy on those who fear Him  
in every generation.  
He has shown the strength of His arm,  
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

*He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

*He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for He has remembered His promise of mercy,  
the promise He made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children forever*

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and will be forever. Amen.  
(text – Luke 1: 46-55)*

**Reflection** – Mary's Song of Resilience – Rev. Debra McKnight

There is no rose

Kevin Memley

*There is no rose of such virtue as the rose that bare Jesu. Alleluia.  
For in this rose contained was heaven and earth in little space; res miranda (a thing to be marveled)  
By that rose we may well see he is God in persons three. Pares forma (equal in form)  
Angels sung the shepherd to: Gloria in excelsis Deo (Glory to God in the highest); Gaudeamus (Let us rejoice)  
Leave we now this wordly mirth and follow we this joyful birth. Transeamus (Let us go).*

**Fourth Lesson** – Luke 2: 1-7 – Mark Lowe

**Carol**

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Forest Green (English melody)  
arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams

**Umeri and audience**

*O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;  
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.  
How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.*

*Where children pure and happy pray to the blessed Child,  
where misery cries out to Thee, Son of the mother mild;  
where charity stands watching and faith holds wide the door,  
the dark night wakes, the glory breaks, and Christmas comes once more.*

*O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!*



**Reflection** – O magnum mysterium – Charles Anthony Silvestri

O magnum mysterium

James McCray  
(1938-2018)

**Umeri**

*O great mystery and wondrous sacrament,  
That animals should see the newborn Lord, lying in their manger!  
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb was worthy to bear  
the Lord Jesus Christ. Alleluia!  
(text – responsory for Matins on Christmas Day)*



# Part 2- Going Home by Another Way

## Fifth Lesson – Luke 2: 8-16 – Marsha Ternus

Joseph

*a starry sky is in my arms  
I hear my breathing—now not only mine  
each dawn is different now that you are here*

*sometimes I stare at you, sometimes I tremble  
I stand above you, my head a moon  
and you down there on the sweet straw*

*each dawn is different now that you are here*

*I hear my breathing, now not only mine*

*all my dreams for you wondering who you might be,  
how far you may have come to be with us*

*each dawn is different now that you are here*

*sometimes I feel among waves too steep,  
my boat too small  
for these wide hands to have made*

Timothy Takach  
(b.1978)

*when I've been working when the sun is low,  
I sink into the stream and lie there, pale as stone  
and still this burning that I feel  
so deep inside me*

*how are you mine, child?  
how are you ever mine?  
I am like a father  
I am like a father*

*so let the old Joseph die, the new be born  
hold high this lantern for the world to see—  
this child, this light, this saving one*

*a starry sky within my arms (o heart)  
each dawn is different now that you are here  
(text – Michael Dennis Browne)*

**Reflection** – Each dawn is different now that you are here – Charles Anthony Silvestri

## Carol

The First Nowell

English carol, seventeenth century

### Umeri and audience

*The first Nowell the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
In fields as they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.*

*They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far,  
And to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.  
Nowell...*

*This star drew nigh to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest,  
And there it did both stop and stay right over the place where Jesus lay.  
Nowell...*

## Sixth Lesson – Matthew 2: 1-12 – Gesine Gerhard

The Three Kings

Healey Willan  
(1880 - 1968)

### Umeri

*"Who knocks tonight so late?" the weary porter said.  
Three kings stood at the gate, each with a crown on head.  
The serving man bowed down; the inn was full, he knew.  
Said he, "in all this town is no fit place for you."*

*A light the manger lit: there lay the Mother meek.  
Said they, "This place is fit: here is the rest we seek!"*

*They loosed their latchet strings; so stood they all unshod.  
Come in, ye kings! And kiss the feet of God.  
(text – Laurence Housman)*



**Reflection** – Going Home by Another Way – Rev. Debra McKnight

The Road Home

Tune: "Prospect" from *Southern Harmony 1835*  
adapted by Stephen Paulus  
(1949 - 2014)

**Gabrielle Sarcone, soprano**  
**Umeri**

*Tell me where is the road I can call my own,  
That I left, that I lost, so long ago?  
All these years I have wandered, Oh, when will I know  
There's a way, there's a road that will lead me home?*

*After wind, after rain, when the dark is done,  
As I wake from a dream in the gold of day,  
Through the air there's a calling from far away,  
There's a voice I can hear that will lead me home.*

*Rise up, follow me, come away is the call,  
With love in your heart as the only song;  
There is no such beauty as where you belong,  
Rise up, follow me, I will lead you home.  
(text- Michael Dennis Browne)*



# Part 3- Thy Kingdom Come

**Seventh Lesson** – Luke 4: 16-20 – Michele Whitty

A Boy Was Born

Benjamin Britten  
(1913 - 1976)

**Umeri**

*A boy was born in Bethlehem;  
Rejoice for that, Jerusalem! Alleluya.*

*He let himself a servant be,  
That all mankind he might set free: Alleluya.*

*Then praise the Word of God who came to dwell within a  
human frame: Alleluya.*

*(text – sixteenth century anonymous German;  
translation by Percy Dearmer)*

**Reflection** – All eyes were fixed on him- Charles Anthony Silvestri

**Eighth Lesson** – John 1: 1-14 – Timothy Sheaff

O nata lux

David Dickau  
(b.1953)

**Umeri**

*O light born of light, Jesus, redeemer of the world,  
Mercifully deem worthy and accept the praises and prayers of your supplicants.*

*You who once deigned to be clothed in flesh for the sake of the lost ones,  
Grant us to be made members of your holy body.*

*(text – hymn for Lauds, Feast of the Transfiguration)*

## Want to hear more?

If you have enjoyed this afternoon's concert, we hope you'll consider donating to Umeri as it seeks to establish itself as a viable ensemble and to pay the bills (\$5800) for this livestream concert. You may donate online at <https://alumni.drake.edu/giving>. Select "other" when you see "type of donation" and write Umeri in the description. To make a donation with a check (payable to Drake University), contact Dr. Aimee Beckmann-Collier (aimee.beckmann-collier@drake.edu)

### Collect and Blessing – Bishop William Joensen

#### Carol

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing

Felix Mendelssohn  
(1809 - 1847)

#### Umeri and audience

*Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King; peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all you nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;  
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord:  
Late in time behold Him come, offspring of the Virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see: hail the Incarnate Deity,  
Pleased as one with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"*

*Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by, born that we no more may die,  
Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"*

#### Postlude

Joy to the World

arr. Alfred Fedak and Ronald Besemer

Susan Ihnen, organ

# umeri

DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR

Susan Ihnen, piano/organ  
Aimee Beckmann-Collier, conductor

## Soprano

Jessica Belch  
Halle Fish  
Anna Gebhardt  
Gabrielle Sarcone  
Elizabeth Watson

## Alto

Caitlin Carr  
Amy Deist  
Mollie Lawler  
Sara Sherman  
Allison Vehlewald  
Elizabeth White

## Tenor

Casey Cerveny  
Seth Hammond  
Justin Scheel  
Scott Smidt  
Tanner Smith

## Bass

Jacob Fross  
Jeff Johannsen  
Ian Ksiazak  
Daniel Minnie  
Nate Mohrhauser  
Ben Schultz

## About the Choir

Founded in November 2019, *Umeri* is an ensemble of alumni of the Drake Choir, Drake University. Members participating in the ensemble since its inception graduated from Drake in 1992 through 2020, majored in a wide variety of academic disciplines, and are contributing to the Greater Des Moines community in many professional areas, including education, health care, public relations, finance, marketing, accounting, and the arts. Among their employers are a number of school districts, as well as the Meredith Corporation, Wells Fargo, Nationwide, US Cellular, Des Moines Performing Arts, Iowa Public Radio, Principal Financial Group, Drake University, Target, the Iowa Events Center, Make-a-Wish Iowa, the Iowa Center for Economic Success, and the Iowa High School Girls Athletic Union. Many are also involved in volunteer activities and several are the parents of young children.

*Umeri*, which takes its name from the Latin word for “shoulders,” since Drake Choir members were frequently reminded that they stood on the shoulders of those who came before them, is a project-based ensemble. The choir rehearses 6-7 times preceding a concert, thus requiring a high level of musical independence and advance preparation on the part of each member. *Umeri* intends to present two or three concerts per year, with their next performance dependent on the pandemic. For further information, contact Dr. Aimee Beckmann-Collier ([aimee.beckmann-collier@drake.edu](mailto:aimee.beckmann-collier@drake.edu)).




# About this Concert

*The Lessons and Carols of Christmas* is a one-hundred-year-old tradition of King's College, Cambridge University, but actually has a somewhat older history. Until the late nineteenth century, Christmas carols were performed by singers visiting homes; they were not heard in churches. But in 1878 John Stainer introduced carols into choral evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral in London and in 1880 Edward White Benson, Bishop of Truro, created a predecessor to the later King's College festival at Truro Cathedral in Cornwall. Benson was concerned about the excessive consumption of alcohol during the holiday season and wanted to attract revelers from pubs into the church.

His experimental festival of carols, choral music, and readings was quite successful and became the model for the now legendary Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols that has been performed at King's College, Cambridge, since 1918. The King's College Festival was established by Eric Milner-White, Dean of the College, in response to the tragedies of World War I. The BBC has broadcast the Festival since 1928 and it has been televised since 1954. The Festival is heard by millions of listeners across the globe each Christmas Eve, including in the United States, where has been broadcast live on National Public Radio stations since 1979. (Tune in on Iowa Public Radio at 9:00 am on December 24 to hear the live broadcast.)

*Umeri* has begun its musical life with *The Lessons, Reflections, and Carols of Christmas* in 2019 and 2020 in order to provide an opportunity for listeners to enjoy the music of the season in a reflective and joyful atmosphere. Our 2020 concert is based on the King's College model but offers a unique recasting of its structure in order to focus on specific aspects of the Christmas story: **O magnum mysterium**, the mystery and wonder of divinity poured into a finite, fragile, vulnerable form; **Going Home by Another Way**, with its emphasis on traveling through uncertainty to engage in brave and counter-cultural behavior; and **Thy Kingdom Come**, recognizing the great and holy purpose of the Nativity; that is, that its promise is paid for by those who recognize that they are called to work for justice, leading through darkness into light.

*Umeri* turned to poet Charles Anthony Silvestri, a medieval historian, and Rev. Debra McKnight, a United Methodist minister, to provide reflective pillars for this new structure. *Umeri* commissioned Tony to write reflections that anchor the program, providing a connection between the ancient Christmas narrative and the events of 2020. Debra McKnight's perceptive and impactful writings invite the listener to go beyond a superficial notice of characters within the story, transforming them and their actions into relevance in our time.



Charles Anthony Silvestri has written texts for some of the most renowned choral composers of our day, including Eric Whitacre, Ola Gjeilo, Kim Arnesen, and Dan Forrest, and is himself a gifted choral singer. The Drake choral program has had a decade-long association with Tony, who was a featured poet, lecturer, and conductor for the 2009 Words and Music project, which involved all four Drake choral ensembles in a semester-long study of the dynamic relationship between texts and music.

Most recently, the Drake choral program commissioned Tony to write the text for *When We Love*, a piece by Elaine Hagenberg, a nationally recognized composer and a Drake music alumna. (Note that Umeri is singing one of Elaine's pieces today.) The product of Elaine's and Tony's collaboration was premiered by the Drake Chamber Choir in May 2019.

Debra McKnight, a minister of the United Methodist Church, is the founding pastor of Urban Abbey, a unique combination of a bookstore, fair trade coffee shop, and church located in the heart of downtown Omaha's Old Market. Its hallmarks are inclusion, hospitality, and community partnerships. Rev. McKnight is a graduate of the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, which invited her to love liturgy, explore diverse theological perspectives, push boundaries within the church's traditional structures, and experiment with preaching in a rigorous academic community. Before attending seminary, she earned a master's degree in education and lived in Germany where she put it to good use as an education counselor for active duty military personnel. Her work at Urban Abbey focuses on social justice, liturgy, and building community.

## Donors

Umeri gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the following donors, who have made it possible to turn our dream of establishing an alumni choir into a reality and who have allowed us to share this concert with a wide audience via livestream.

Anonymous  
John Armstrong  
William and Marjorie Baum  
Jessica and William Belch  
Caitlin Carr  
Emily and Jim Duong  
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Michael Hess  
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Jeanne and Jim O'Halloran  
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