

UMERI
DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR
AIMEE BECKMANN-COLLIER, CONDUCTOR

THE LESSONS,
CAROLS, AND
REFLECTIONS OF

Christmas

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2021
3:00 PM
ST. AMBROSE CATHEDRAL
607 HIGH STREET





ABOUT THIS CONCERT

The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas, presented today by *Umeri*, the Drake University alumni choir, is patterned on *The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols of Christmas* offered annually at King's College, Cambridge University, in the United Kingdom. That festival is a more than one-hundred-year-old tradition presented in the King's College Chapel on Christmas Eve and broadcast around the world; a festival that, at its inception, was a response to a world changed by the devastation of World War I.

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 it has been broadcast live on National Public Radio stations since 1979. (You can hear the live broadcast on Iowa Public Radio at 9:00 am on December 24.)

Umeri began its musical life in 2019 by presenting *The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas* in order to provide an opportunity for listeners to enjoy the music of the season in a reflective and joyful atmosphere. Our 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:

The people who walked in darkness, with its emphasis on the light and hope offered to those who are called to work for justice, leading through darkness into light; *The Gift of 'Yes'*, centering on Mary as a model of responsiveness and perseverance in the midst of uncertainty; and *Re-alignment, Relevance, and Response*, which recognizes that the stories we hear today, in word and music, remind us of the counter-cultural nature of the Christmas narrative and call us to respond in life-giving ways.

In this third year of presenting *The Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas*, Umeri turned to poet Charles Anthony Silvestri, a medieval historian and text writer for choral music; Rev. Robyn Bles, pastor of Wakonda Christian Church in Des Moines; and Rev. Tim Fitzgerald, a recently retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines, to provide reflective pillars for this structure of spoken word and music. Father Tim has also provided substantial assistance in crafting this concert as a gift of light and promise, a time to reflect and then respond in hope and peace.

*This service of lessons and carols
follows a pattern that is time honored.
We hear from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures and ponder their
meaning,
then we respond—in song, in silence, in measured words.*

*We listen and we respond: it is the rhythm, the cadence of human life.
Every love, every relationship,
the heartbeat of every household—
all are built upon that blessed dialogue.*

It is even the rhythm of our rapport with the divine.

*We hear the Lord speak to us—the Scriptures of our service brief excerpts
only.*

*Even so, listen closely, for we will hear
of promise, of visions, of hope greater than sorrow or suffering or despair.
The words will speak of dreams to delight us once again:*

*that war will end, swords be turned into plowshares,
exiles will be welcomed home,
and peace will break out in our day.*

*These are words intended for our hearts, food for our spirits.
“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”*

So we seek to respond:

*setting our hearts on that new and better day,
hungering and thirsting for what is right and just,
sheltering the refugee and welcoming the stranger.*

*Let this be a sign for you, the heavenly messenger proclaims.
The ancient Israelites looked for a sign to dispel the darkness,
and so did the shepherds,
and so do we.*

*So listen now with the heart,
revel in this ancient story of light shining in the darkness,
embrace again its visions and dreams,
and be strong in hope.*

THE LESSONS, CAROLS, AND REFLECTIONS OF

Christmas



PART I – THE PEOPLE WHO WALKED IN DARKNESS

A light shall shine

from *Three Introits for Christmastide*

Daniel Pinkham

(1923–2006)

Umeri

*A Light shall shine upon us this day: for the Lord is born to us:
And He shall be called Wonderful, God, the Prince of Peace,
The Father of the world to come: of whose reign there shall be no end. Alleluia.
(text – Isaiah 9:2-6)*

Processional – 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!”*

Bidding Prayer

Bishop William Joensen

First Lesson– Genesis 15: 1-2, 9, 21; and 18: 1-2, 9-15

Mr. Brian Smith and Ms. Kayleigh Koester

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

arr. Terry Schlenker

(b. 1957)

Umeri

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O Come, O Come, Thou Lord of might, who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times did'st give the law in cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O Come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from evil's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.
Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by Thine Advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice, Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

*O Come, Thou Key of David, come, and open wide our Heaven'ly home:
Make safe the way that leads on High, and close the path to misery.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
(text – metrical paraphrase of the O antiphons from the eighth century)*

Second Lesson – Genesis 45:1-5, 8-9, 25-27; and 46:1-6

Ms. Mary-Claire Uselding

Reflection – Imagine That!

Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald

Third Lesson – Isaiah 9:1, 5-6

Mr. Charlie Nawl

E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come

Paul Manz
(1919-2009)

Umeri

*Peace be to you and grace from Him who freed us from our sins,
Who loved us all and shed His blood that we might saved be.
Sing holy, holy to our Lord, the Lord, Almighty God,
Who was and is and is to come; sing holy, holy, Lord!*

*Rejoice in heaven, all ye that dwell therein, rejoice on earth, ye saints below,
For Christ is coming, is coming soon, for Christ is coming soon!*

*E'en so, Lord Jesus, quickly come, and night shall be no more;
They need no light nor lamp nor sun, for Christ will be their All!
(adaptation of Revelation 22 by Ruth Manz)*



PART II – THE GIFT OF ‘YES’

Fourth Lesson – Luke 1:26-35, 38

Ms. Bridget Grace Sheaff

Magnificat

Arvo Pärt
(b. 1935)

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)*

Fifth Lesson – Matthew 1:18-25

Rev. Nipin Thakidipurathu Scaria

Reflection – The Gift of ‘Yes’

Rev. Robyn Bles

Sixth Lesson – Luke 2:17

Dr. Gesine Gerhard

What Sweeter Music Can We Bring?

David Dickau
(b. 1953)

Umeri

*What sweeter music can we bring,
Than a carol for to sing
The birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice! Awake the string!*

*We see him come, and know Him ours,
Who, with His sunshine, and His showers,
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.*

*Dark and dull night, fly hence away,
And give the honor to this day,
That sees December turned to May.*

*If we may ask the reason, say
The why, and wherefore, all things here
Seem like the springtime of the year?*

*The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is, we find a room
To welcome Him. The nobler part
Of all the house here, is the heart,*

*Which we will give Him; and bequeath
This holly, and this ivy wreath,
To do Him honor; who's our King,
And Lord of all this reveling.
(text-Robert Herrick)*

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!*



PART III – RE-ALIGNMENT, RELEVANCE, AND RESPONSE

Seventh Lesson – Luke 2:8-16

Mr. Brian Gongol

Silent Night

Franz Gruber
(1787-1863)
arr. Malcolm Sargent

Umeri

*Silent night, holy night. Round thy head a radiant light.
Lovely boy with raven hair, parents guard thee with tender care.
Sleep, thou darling one, sleep; sleep, thou darling one, sleep.*

*Silent night, holy night. Wise men see the star so bright.
"Hallelujah," the angels sing; shepherds near and glad tidings bring.
Christ the Savior is here. Jesus our Savior is here.*

*Silent night, holy night. Son of God, O blessed sight.
On thy lips a sweet smile of love, sent to earth from the heaven above.
Christ the Savior is here. Jesus our Savior is here.
(text – Malcolm Sargent)*

Reflection – On the edge

from *Sounding the Seasons: Seventy Sonnets for the Christian Year* – Malcolm Guise
Mr. Craig Ihnen

Eighth Lesson – Matthew 2:1-12

The Honorable Marsha Ternus

Past Three A Clock

traditional English carol
arr. Edwin Fissinger

Umeri

*Past three a clock, and a cold frosty morning: past three a clock, Good morrow,
masters all!*

*Born is our Savior there in the manger, Son of the Father, Father eternal.
Past three a clock...*

*Celestial choirs announce His coming, with joyful sounds the birth they proclaim.
Past three a clock...*

*Shepherds kneel down in rapt adoration, singing their praises to the Redeemer.
Past three a clock...*

*Kings from the East with gifts for the Christ child, follow the star of Bethlehem.
Past three a clock...*

*Then to the stable with gifts so precious, came the three rulers to honor Him.
Past three a clock...*

*Gold and rare incense of earthly value, are not the gifts our Savior desires.
Past three a clock...*

*Christ the Lord desires not our riches, only our love unselfishly offered.
Past three a clock...*

*Still that Child so dear and gentle, patiently waits for us to love Him.
Past three a clock...all's well.*

In the Bleak Mid-winter

John Armstrong
(b. 1946)

Umeri

*In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan;
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.*

*What can I give Him,
Poor as I am? –
If I were a Shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man
I would do my part,--
Yet what I can I give Him, --
Give my heart.
(text – Christina Rossetti)*

*Our God, heaven cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain,
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty—
Jesus Christ.*

Umeri is honored to premiere this piece, which was commissioned by Jane Colavecchi in celebration of the seventieth wedding anniversary of her parents, Joe and Joanne Colavecchi.

Joe and Joanne met in their college choir and choral singing has been at the center of their seventy-year marriage. The Colavecchis chose the text set by composer John Armstrong and have been active participants in the rehearsal process which culminates today in the first performance of this piece.

Ninth Lesson - Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Mr. Diego Leon

Joseph

Timothy Takach

(b. 1978)

Umeri

*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*

*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 – On the Edge of Relevance

Dr. Charles Anthony Silvestri

Coventry Carol

traditional English carol

(b. 1978)

Umeri

*Lully, lulla, Thou little tiny Child, by, by, lully, lullay,
Thou little tiny Child, by, by, lully, lullay.*

*O sisters too, how may we do for to preserve this day
This poor youngling, for whom we do sing, by, by, lully, lullay?*

*Herod, the King, in his raging, charged he hath this day
His men of might, in his own sight, All young children to slay.*

*That woe is me, poor child, for thee! And ever morn and day,
For Thy parting neither say nor sing by, by, lully, lullay!*

Tenth Lesson – John 1: 1-14

Mr. Timothy Sheaff

Collect and Blessing

Bishop William Joensen

Carol – Joy to the World

George Frideric Handel

(1685-1759)

Umeri and Audience

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, And heav'n and nature sing.*

*Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns; let us, our songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness, and wonders of His love.*

Postlude

Joy to the World

arr. Alfred Fedak and Ronald Besemer

Susan Ihnen, organ



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Donate

If you have enjoyed this afternoon's concert, we hope you'll consider donating to Umeri. You may donate online at <https://alumni.drake.edu/umeri> or give your contribution to singers stationed at the doors following the concert.



Visit our Website

We encourage you to visit Umeri's website (umeri.wp.drake.edu), where you'll find information about the choir and access archived concert recordings. Today's concert will be posted on the website on December 22 for viewing throughout the holiday season.



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Follow and like our page on Facebook (@umeridsm) to find the latest information about upcoming performances.

umeri

DRAKE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CHOIR

AIMEE BECKMANN-COLLIER, CONDUCTOR

SUSAN IHNEN, PIANO AND ORGAN

Soprano

Anna Gebhardt
Leah Barnett
Gabrielle Sarcone
Kelly Schnackenberg
Elizabeth Watson

Alto

Lindsay Fiegle
Kayleigh Koester
Abbi Nelson
Maggie Parker
Elizabeth White

Tenor

Zach Barry
Trevor Bridge
Seth Hammond
Justin Scheel
Tanner Smith

Bass

Jacob Fross
Ian Ksiazak
Daniel Minnie
Nathan Jacobson
Nate Mohrhauser
Thomas Riordan



ABOUT THE CHOIR

Founded in November 2019, Umeri is an ensemble of alumni of the Drake Choir, Drake University. Singers who have participated in the choir since its inception graduated from Drake in 1992 through 2021, 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, sports administration, and the arts. Among their employers are a number of school districts, as well as the Meredith Corporation, Wells Fargo, Nationwide Insurance, US Cellular, Des Moines Performing Arts, the Iowa Arts Council, Iowa Public Radio, ACLU of Iowa, Principal Financial Group, Drake University, Target, the Iowa Events Center, Make-a-Wish Iowa, the Iowa Center for Economic Success, the Iowa High School Girls Athletic Union, the West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, and Veterans Hospital of Central Iowa.

Umeri, which takes its name from the Latin word for “shoulders,” because 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 presents three concerts per year, with their next performance, *Considering Matthew Shepard*, scheduled for June 2022 at Drake University. For further information, contact Dr. Aimee Beckmann-Collier (aimee.beckmann-collier@drake.edu)



ABOUT THE REFLECTION WRITERS

Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald is a priest of the Diocese of Des Moines. He has served as pastor, most recently at Ss. John and Paul Parish, Altoona; as teacher and resource for the St. Joseph Educational Center, West Des Moines, the Center for Pastoral Liturgy at the University of Notre Dame, and the diocese; and as author of materials and articles on worship, prayer, and sacramental practices. In retirement he is looking forward to new experiences of ministry.

Rev. Robyn Bles is an ordained minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the senior minister at Wakonda Christian Church in Des Moines, and holds degrees from Texas Christian University and Vanderbilt Divinity School. For more than fifteen years, she has served congregations throughout the United States and her ministry has ranged from a focus on children and youth to community outreach and justice. Robyn says that she “loves what the church can do for the community.”

Dr. Charles Anthony Silvestri, a medieval historian and professor of history at Washburn University in Kansas, 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 an experienced choral musician. The Drake choral program has had a more than 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 Drake music alumna. The product of Elaine’s and Tony’s collaboration was premiered by the Drake Chamber Choir in May 2019. Tony has been involved with Umeri’s annual Lessons, Carols, and Reflections of Christmas since its inception in 2019.



UMERI SUPPORTERS

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, as well as those in the past year, with a wide audience via livestream.

Anonymous	Rev. Michael Hess
Ann Anderson	Rev. Larry Hoffman
John Armstrong	Mary Honeyman-Speichinger and
William and Marjorie Baum	Jared Speichinger
Rev. Lawrence Beeson	Marianne and Frank Ksiazak
Jessica and William Belch	Sandra Linford
Virginia Bennett	Rev. John Ludwig
Rev. Frank Bognanno	Janice and Bob Myers
Nancy and David Boyd	Jeanne and Jim O'Halloran
Susan and Greg Bridge	Rev. Stephen Orr
Caitlin Carr	Sue and Ron Pogge
Cory Claussen	Rev. David Polich
Jay A. Davidson and	Ben Schultz
Margie M. Davidson	Suzanne and John Shambrook
Rev. Thomas DeCarlo	Dan and Sara Sherman
Amy and Chris Deist	Donna and John Smidt
Emily and Jim Duong	Joyce Smith
Don and Marilyn Duwelius	Allison and Mitchell Vehlewald
Rev. Timothy Fitzgerald	David Watson
Jacob Fross	Michele and Steve Whitty
Ann and Bob Gernes	
Rev. Ken Gross	



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