MUSIC NOTES, APRIL 4, 2021

Prelude: Carillon de Westminster, Op. 54, No. 6 – Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

Anthem: Ye choirs of new Jerusalem – C.V. Stanford

Communion: This joyful Eastertide – Charles Wood

Hallelujah – Handel ​(before final hymn)

Postlude: Toccata (Symphony No. 5) – Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)

Choral Music Notes:

**Sir Charles Villiers Stanford**, was a conductor, an organist, and a prolific composer of many genres, both sacred and secular. He received doctorates from both Oxford and Cambridge, and served as Professor of music at Cambridge from 1887 until his death in 1924. He also taught at the Royal College of Music and conducted the London Bach Choir for seventeen years and the Leeds Triennial Festival for nine years. Scholar Kenneth Long praises Stanford’s anthem Ye choirs of new Jerusalem, saying it “is radiant with joy and full of the spirit of Easter.” The joyful melody begins with the sopranos and quickly goes on a tonal journey when the rest of the choir enters. The middle shifts focus to the basses and tenors with a new melody in the minor mode. This is passed around the choir before returning to the original melody. Later we hear that minor melody again, now transformed to major, praising the Trinity. A glorious “Alleluia” closes this festive anthem.

**Charles Wood** was born in Northern Ireland, where he had his early musical education at the Armagh Cathedral. He later studied with Stanford at the Royal College of Music in London with whom he became a close friend and colleague. His work shows much influence from Stanford, although Wood focused his career much more in sacred music. Wood made significant contributions to sacred songs in three different publications. The Cowley Carol Book (first edition published 1901, second edition published 1902) holds many of his arrangements and harmonizations, from which we find the well-known harmonization of This joyful Eastertide. In this setting, Wood excellently captures the exuberance of Easter.

Organ Music Notes:

**Louis Vierne** was a French composer and organist, famously blind from birth, who held the post as organist at Notre Dame Cathedral for most of his career. He composed eight organ symphonies – a genre rather unique to France, started by Charles-Marie Widor. These pieces are born out of the unique French organs built by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll during the 19th century, which had the capability to build dramatic crescendos with a breadth of Romantic sound, much like an orchestra. Among his many organ compositions are four suites of fantasy pieces. Perhaps the most well-known of them is Carillon de Westminster, which comes from the third suite. Composed after a visit to England, the piece, as one might presume, is based on the famous Westminster chimes. It slowly builds to a glorious climax.

**Charles-Marie Widor** was a French organist, composer and influential professor at the Paris Conservatory. There he taught organ and later composition working with great pupils such as Vierne, Dupré, and Tournemire. Widor served as organist at St. Sulpice for nearly 64 years and played one of the masterfully built instruments by Cavaillé-Coll. These new “Symphonic” instruments played a major role in forming a new genre of organ music pioneered by Widor, known as the organ symphony. His famous Toccata is the final movement of his fifth Organ Symphony. The toccata, characterized by many fast notes in the hands and a gliding, mostly stepwise melody in the pedal, is a favorite for Easter and other festive occasions.