

TELEGRAM & GAZETTE

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1996 ■ WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

50 CENTS C3

ENTERTAINMENT

Boston Pops concert rings in holiday season with Bell



DAVID LILES

Catherine Thorpe was the featured soloist as the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra performed a Christmas concert yesterday at the Worcester Centrum.

By Richard Ducket
Telegram & Gazette Reviewer

WORCESTER — It was pops with polish at the Worcester Centrum yesterday afternoon as the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra put on a classy Christmas concert that seemed to charm most of the 11,000-plus people in attendance.

The youthful Keith Lockhart — making his Worcester debut in conducting the orchestra — was an amiable host and facilitator during a program that also included the magical richness of the *Gloriae Dei Cantores* choir and a spirited reading of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" by a tuxedoed and top-hatted Upton Bell.

The idea of including a local personality is a good way of adding an extra splash to the proceedings. Time was a few years ago when the Boston Pops was occasionally guilty of coming to the Centrum for its annual holiday visit and putting together a rather institutional sort of effort (it also didn't help that Lockhart's predecessor, John Williams, never made it here). But matters have improved in that regard, and yesterday's performance readily demonstrated that a concert of this type can be highly professional and extremely pleasing at the same time.

The orchestra itself was crisp and cohesive, with the musicians making their entrances with the same sharp tunefulness whether the piece be "Hansel and Gretel" or "Jingle Bells."

The program was mostly accented to Christmas favorites — carols and sing-along pieces — but also included a surprise or two, as in a catchy jazz number titled "Good Swing Wenceslaus."

MUSIC REVIEW

The concert got under way with "A Christmas Flourish" (an arrangement of "Shiloh," "Joy to the World," and "Angels We Have Heard on High"), which immediately set the high standard for the afternoon as the sounds of the orchestra blended nicely with the beautiful singing of *Gloriae Dei Cantores*. For those unfamiliar with the 40-member Orleans-based choir, the group is quite a find. Even an a cappella rendition of some basically simple Christmas tunes had a certain teasing gleaming musical texture all its own.

The orchestra ably conveyed the dashing and escalating refrain at the heart of Bizet's Impish "Farandole" from "L'Arlesienne Suite No. 2," while soprano soloist Catherine Thorpe revealed a sweet voice that came across to good effect in numbers such as "O Holy Night." Another interesting portion featured two lovely compositions by John Williams from his score for "Home Alone" (the movie was so juvenile you forget how good a job Williams actually did), and additional highlights included a sing-along that topped off the formal part of the program.

The only down note came from the dissonant direction of professional New England sports, as Bell, Lockhart and Thorpe all took turns in updating how the New England Patriots were faring in their losing effort against the Dallas Cowboys. Maybe the program should have also included Tchaikovsky's "Pathetique." But the Centrum

crowd didn't seem to care — they were there for the music. And the concert concluded as it had begun with three encores (including "We

Wish You A Merry Christmas"), which all scored happy and harmonious touchdowns.

Chant flourishes in Protestant religious community

Two years ago The Tidings reported on a concert given by a choir from Cape Cod in Massachusetts, the *Gloriae Dei Cantores*. Last month I visited the place where the choir is based, and I was astounded.

More than 30 years ago two women, both Protestants, turned a bed-and-breakfast lodging into a retreat house and gathered together a religious community. In 1965, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, they heard Gregorian chant for the first time.

In 1971 a couple, Richard Pugsley and Elizabeth Patterson, joined the community. Both were professional music educators, and they became music directors of the little community. They spent several years trying various types of music for the psalms and other sacred music that the community was using for worship.

Finally, in 1976 they returned to the founders' earlier love of Gregorian chant. They sent an order to the bookstore at Solesmes abbey for 250 copies each of the monastic antiphonal and the Roman gradual — chant books for the Office and Mass of the liturgical year.

Today this ecumenical community has grown to well over 300 members. Some of them — 25 men and 50 women — have

taken the three vows of religious life, living in a friary and two convents next to the retreat house. Almost a hundred couples live in the immediate neighborhood in their own homes, having taken a vow of stability as members of the community. Their children, some 50 or 60, are growing up in a religious atmosphere, attending



Rev. Jerome F. Weber

THE SONG INSIDE

the local public schools.

At any given time, a number of men and women are living with the community as resident members, testing their call to religious life before taking vows. Virtually all of these people belong to mainline Protestant denominations, and among them are 15 clergymen of five different denominations. Two of the clergymen are currently studying for doctorates in liturgy, one at The Catholic University of America, the other at St. John's University in Minnesota.

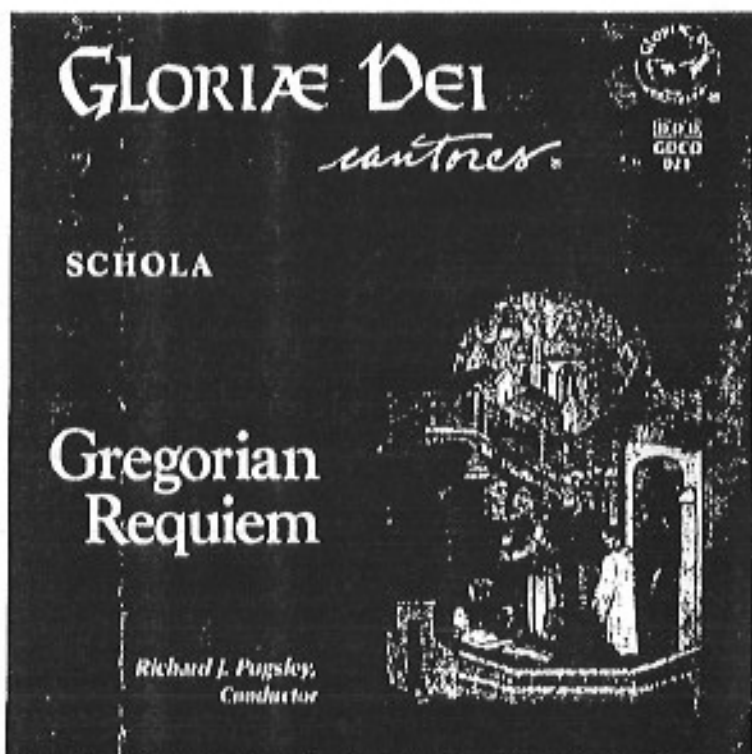
And what is the center of this community's life? It is the complete Divine Office, sung in Latin to the authentic Gregorian chants. Every year Dr. Mary Berry (a Catholic nun for 55 years who taught for many years

at Cambridge University) has come annually to teach the community to sing chant and to give workshops on chant. Pugsley and Patterson have gone to Cambridge and to Solesmes annually to study chant intensively.

This Protestant ecumenical community celebrates a eucharistic liturgy in English daily at noon according to their own version of an ancient formula (they formerly used the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer). As they do so, they sing the chants of the Latin Mass, and they reserve the sacrament in a tabernacle for distribution after Vespers to those who were at work during the day. The chapel is crowded now, so they are planning to build a new chapel in the basilica style of ancient Ravenna.

Catholics have heard all the familiar reasons given for not singing chant, or any other Latin music, in church. This flourishing ecumenical community, however, has apparently not heard the message, so they have chosen to enrich their spiritual life with the ancient music of Catholic worship. They admit to having struggled with the idea of using the Latin language and the Catholic liturgy, but they have resolved those questions.

Suggested listening: The *Gloriae Dei Cantores* have made more than 20 CDs (also issued as cassettes) sold on their own label, *Gloriae Dei* (distributed nationally by Koch International). Three of these are of Gregorian chant,



sung by the schola under Dr. Pugsley.

The four sets of Mass Propers of Christmas (including the Vigil Mass) are on GDCD 005, along with the four Marian antiphons in both solemn and simple tones. All of the sets of Mass Propers of Easter week are on GDCD 015, some of these never before recorded.

Their newest recording is the Requiem Mass (GDCD 021), including alternate Proper chants assigned in the latest revision of the Roman gradual and chants for the vigil for the dead.

The community also distributes on the Paraclete label the 15 CDs recorded by the monks of Solesmes since 1980 (S 820 to S 834). In addition, they have just issued Paraclete S 835, a partial reissue of RCA Victor's landmark Solesmes recording of 1930, the first ever made at the abbey. ★

Father Jerome F. Weber is a priest of the Diocese of Syracuse, N.Y. He is a published author specializing in early music and is an occasional guest host of the nationally syndicated radio program, "Millennium of Music."