

PLU Ringers
A Christmas Potpourri

Sunday, December 5, 2021 at 7pm
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music

Pacific Lutheran University
School of Arts and Communication / Department of Music presents

PLU Ringers

A Christmas Potpourri

Linda Miller, *director*

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Welcome to Lagerquist Concert Hall.

Masks must be worn at all times while indoors and for the duration of the performance.
Please disable the audible signal on all watches and cellular phones for the duration of the concert.
Use of cameras, recording equipment and all digital devices is not permitted in the concert hall.

PROGRAM

- Still, Still, Still** **Traditional**
arr. Douglas Wagner
- Rise Up Shepherd, and Follow** **Spiritual**
arr. Cynthia Dobrinski
Sophia Ramos, *clarinet*
- Sheep May Safely Graze** **J. S. Bach (1685-1750)**
arr. Barbara Kinyon
Natalia Parmly, *piano*
- Lo, How A rose E'er Blooming** **Traditional**
arr. Michael Kastner & Kevin McChesney
- Noel!** **arr. Dale Wood (1934-2003)**
Megan Koons, *flute* • Ben Martin, *soprano saxophone*
- We Three Kings** **John Henry Hopkins, Jr. (1820-1891)**
arr. Linda Miller
Campian Roberts, *bass*
- Mary Did You Know?** **Mark Lowery (b. 1958) & Buddy Greene (b. 1953)**
arr. Douglas Wagner
- Peace, Peace** **Rick Powell (1935-2006) & Sylvia Powell**
arr. Fred Bock

Program Notes

Still, Still, Still

The melody for *Still, Still, Still* is a traditional folk tune from the Austrian state of Salzburg. The carol appeared for the first time in 1865 in a folksong collection by Vinzenz Maria Süß, the founder of the Salzburg Museum. The words describe the peacefulness of the infant Jesus and his mother as the baby is sung to sleep. The modern standard German version is attributed to Georg Gotsch. In this arrangement by well-known handbell composer and arranger Douglas Wagner, you will also hear quotations of the melodies from *O Little Town of Bethlehem* and *Away in a Manger*.

Rise Up Shepherd, and Follow

This spiritual first appeared as a poem included in a short story about slave life during the period between Christmas and the new year. The spiritual was disseminated widely in a songbook titled *Religious Folksongs of the Negro as Sung on the Plantations*. Spirituals were first heard and then transcribed as a manuscript for publication. Prior to these publications, spirituals were passed down orally based upon memory. It is a challenge to notate any kind of folk music, as the same tune may have numerous variations based on who is singing it. In this lively arrangement for handbells, you will see the choir use a variety of techniques that include:

- Thumb damp – placing the thumb on the bell housing to muffle the sound slightly
- Martellato – striking the bell horizontally on the padded table
- Mart-Lift – martellato with a quick lift up from the table
- Mallet – with the bell lying on the table, strike the casting with a mallet
- Roll – similar to a single stroke percussion roll
- Shake – holding the bell vertically, shake rapidly

Sheep May Safely Graze

This piece in its original form is a soprano aria found in a cantata written in 1713 for the birthday of the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels by J. S. Bach. It was not written to be a Christmas song, but the sentiment is a fitting accompaniment to the Christmas story in which sheep and shepherds figure prominently. The text can be translated as follows:

Sheep may safely graze and pasture
In a watchful shepherd's sight.
Those who rule with wisdom guiding
Bring to hearts a peace abiding
Bless a land with joy made bright.

Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming

Many carols and other songs evolve over time. Harmonies are modified, words are modified, and often modern versions are noticeably different than the original. *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* is an exception. The tune we now know first appeared in a regional hymnal in 1599 as *Es Ist Ein Ros Entsprungen*. Ten years later, the court composer Michael Praetorius wrote the harmonization we know. There have been few changes to the text other than adding verses, but none to the music. The chords you hear today in a church or mall are the exact chords Praetorius wrote in the exact order he chose. This arrangement incorporates gentler sounds of hand chimes to play the melody in the beginning.

Noel!

This medley of Christmas carols begins with a lively treatment of *Bring A Torch, Jeanette Isabella*, but gives us a taste of several other carols as well. They include *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*, *The First Noel*, and near the end a short quote from *Silent Night*, and *Good Christian Men Rejoice!* Nearly everyone should be able to find a favorite among them. The flute and soprano saxophone add another layer of interest to this tour of favorites.

We Three Kings

We Three Kings is an American contribution to the celebration of Christmas. Music and lyrics were written by John Henry Hopkins, Jr. who became recognized as a leading Episcopal church musician. This carol was written around 1857. It is often dramatized in Christmas pageants, and in fact the composer encouraged its dramatization.

John Carter's piano arrangement of *We Three Kings* was the inspiration for this arrangement for bells, chimes, and bass. The use of the harmonic minor scale helps us imagine the Middle Eastern setting for the story of the three kings' visit to the Christ Child. Hand chimes help create the sense of mystery that surround the place and manner in which this visit took place and the actual number and identities of the kings. As in the title, tradition calls for three kings, probably because of the three gifts named in scripture. However, most Epiphany hymns are vague about the number of kings. The imagery of the star is central to the Epiphany season and the narrative. The refrain focuses on the star and invites us to join the magi following its light.

We Three Kings of Orient are bearing gifts we travers afar.
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.
Oh, star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Mary Did You Know?

Mary Did You Know? came into being when Mark Lowery was writing the script for *The Living Christmas Tree* program at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. It went for seven years without a melody, until Lowery gave it to composer Buddy Greene. Since then, it has been recorded by over 500 artists. In 2014, the a capella group Pentatonix recorded the piece as part of a Christmas album. Their version became a Hot 100 Top 40 hit and their video took the internet by storm. This arrangement by internationally recognized composer Douglas Wagner weaves it together with *What Child is This?*

Peace, Peace

This gentle wish for peace on earth has become the traditional closing for the Ringers' Christmas concert. Its simple melody and universal message make it a song for everyone. Fred Bock penned this arrangement that features a descant and partners in the end with *Silent Night*. Ringers take on the added challenge of singing and ringing for this final selection. We invite the audience to sing along with us on the last verse as we add *Silent Night*.

About the Director

Dr. Linda Miller has been involved in ringing handbells and directing handbell choirs in churches, schools and communities for several decades. In addition, she has served as an area officer in Handbell Musicians of America (HMA). She wrote and has published *ChimeMagic*, a curriculum for using handchimes to teach general music K-5. Miller has presented handchime workshops at numerous HMA and state and regional music educators conferences. Dr. Miller is chair of the music education area at PLU, where she teaches music education courses and places and supervises music student teachers. In addition to her teaching duties, she is faculty advisor of the PLU chapter of the Collegiate Washington Music Educators Association (CWMEA). From 2016-2018, she served as national Chairperson of the Collegiate Advisory Council of the National Association for Music Education.

PLU Ringers

Rachel Benton • Caroline Bergren • Madison Ely • Brent Johnson • Teresa Keck • Trevor Kytola
Jess Morgan • Thomas Morisada • Sarah Nelson • Hailey Wharton • TJ Wheeler

Special thanks to the student instrumentalists who added their talents to our performance tonight:
Megan Koons • Ben Martin • Natalia Parmly • Sophia Ramos • Campian Roberts

This is the first performance with our new bells—all three and a half octaves of them. We are grateful to the donors who gave generously to supplement department funds in the purchase of this instrument. We expect many of you are in our audience tonight and hope you enjoy hearing the bells as much as we enjoy ringing them.