CERDDORION
VOCAL ENSEMBLE

PRESENTS

Magnification
Five Centuries of Music Honoring the Virgin Mary

Robert Isaacs
Guest Conductor
Sunday, November 8, 2009, 4 P.M.
Oratory Church of St. Boniface
190 Duffield Street
Brooklyn, New York

Sunday, November 15, 2009, 3 P.M.
St. Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church
87th Street and West End Avenue
New York, New York
For further information about Cerddorion, please visit our website: www.cerddorion.net.

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The members of Cerddorion are grateful to Doug Keilitz and the Church of Saint Ignatius of Antioch for having provided rehearsal and performance space for this past season.
The Program

Bogoroditse Dievo [Ave Maria]                     Igor Stravinsky  
                                                  (1882–1971)

Magnificat Primi Toni                             Tomás Luis da Victoria  
                                                  (1548–1611)

Marty Silverberg, tenor                           

A Hymn to the Mother of God                      John Tavener  
                                                  (b. 1944)

Regina Caeli                                     Herbert Howells  
                                                  (1892–1983)

Magnificat                                       Arvo Pärt  
                                                  (b. 1935)

Amy Litt, soprano                                

✦✦✦ Intermission ✦✦✦

Hymne à la Vierge                                Pierre Villette  
                                                  (1926–1988)

Chris Ryan, tenor                                

Magnificat (from the Evening Service)            Thomas Attwood Walmisley  
                                                  (1814–1856)

Bonny Hart, soprano                              
Linnea Johnson, alto                             
Eddie Rubeiz, tenor                              
Dean Rainey, bass
Ave Maria  
Robert Parsons  
(c. 1535–1572)

Magnificat I  
Giles Swayne  
(b. 1946)

Judith Cobb, alto  
Kristina Vaskys, alto  
Jeff Lunden, tenor  
Brent Ness, tenor  
Kate Ashby, soprano

Ave Maria  
Anton Bruckner  
(1824–1896)

After this afternoon’s performance, please come downstairs to meet and greet your favorite Cerddorion members at our festive reception! All are invited.

Join us in February!

Please plan to attend a performance of Cerddorion’s next program, “For Love of.....,” on Sunday, February 14 and Saturday, February 20. Cerddorion will present works by Britten, Franck, Grieg, and Monteverdi (among others) and will be led by guest conductor James John. Performances will be held at the Oratory of St. Boniface in Brooklyn and...
Now in its fifteenth season, Cerddorion is one of New York’s most highly regarded volunteer choral ensembles. A chamber group of thirty mixed voices, Cerddorion was founded in 1995 by Susanne Peck and was directed by Kristina Boerger from 2000 through May 2009. The group is known for its eclectic repertoire, encompassing music from the Renaissance to the contemporary. Audiences have come to appreciate the group’s interpretive depth and technical excellence in many styles.

Besides presenting its own varied programs, Cerddorion is frequently invited to perform with other acclaimed artists. Past collaborations include: the North American premiere of Sir John Tavener’s all-night vigil, The Veil of the Temple, performed at Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall (with Dessoff Choral Consortium and choristers from London’s Temple Church); several appearances with the Christopher Caines Dance Company; baroque opera performances with the early music instrumental ensemble Concert Royal; and serving as the resident teaching ensemble for the Dennis Keene Choral Festival in Kent, Connecticut.

In 2006, Cerddorion presented at the Eastern Divisional Convention of the American Choral Directors Association the works they had commissioned from three New York composers for their tenth anniversary season. September 2007 marked the release on the Tzadik label of A Handful of World, Cerddorion’s first commercial recording. The CD is dedicated to vocal works by New York composer Lisa Bielawa and includes Cerddorion’s performance of Bielawa’s Lamentations for a City, which was commissioned and first performed by Cerddorion in 2004.

Robert Isaacs

Robert Isaacs is the acting conductor of choirs at Princeton University. Previously, he spent almost a decade at the Manhattan School of Music, where he helped establish the choral program and taught courses in conducting and ear training. Robert serves on the voice faculty of the City University of New York and the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. He has conducted at Carnegie Hall with the Argento New Music Project, and worked for several years as a voice coach and assistant conductor of the National Youth Choir of Great Britain.

As a solo singer, Robert has made appearances with St. Thomas Fifth Avenue, Pomerium, Harmonium, Bachworks, Piffaro, Musica Sacra, the Gotham City Baroque Orchestra, the Stamford Symphony, the Vox Vocal Ensemble, the Parthenia Viol Consort, the Pro Arte Singers, the
Metropolitan Greek Chorale, the St. Michael’s Choir, and the St. Endellion Festival Chorus. In addition to his solo work, Robert is an enthusiastic advocate for ensemble music, and has enjoyed singing and recording with the New York Collegium, the Virgin Consort, Early Music New York, Voices of Ascension, the St. Ignatius Choir, the Clarion Music Society, the American Radio Choir, the Woodley Ensemble, and the Church of the Advent in Boston. He has collaborated with the conductorless Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, accompanied the Mark Morris Dance Group, and explored extended vocal techniques and just intonation with Toby Twining Music. Robert was a founding member of the Alba Quintet, the Tiffany Consort, Angelus, and Equal Voices. He has twice performed in Jonathan Miller’s fully staged *St. Matthew Passion* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. He was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2006.

Robert graduated with high honors from Harvard University, having designed his own major in choral music. He supported himself for a while as a juggler and unicyclist on the streets of San Francisco, and then spent a year as a Benjamin Trustman Fellow, researching choral rehearsal psychology throughout England and Scandinavia. In 2002, Robert earned an MFA in creative writing from Columbia University; he has published articles on travel, politics, and music in *The New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, *The Baltimore Sun*, and *Church Music Quarterly*. His musical compositions and arrangements are published by the Royal School of Church Music.
Program Notes

Helen of Troy is often cited as the most famous woman of antiquity, but there is no question who has been the subject of more paintings, sculptures, poems, musical compositions, and flowery honorifics than any other woman who has ever lived: Mary, the mother of Jesus. Of the innumerable Marian texts—Ave Maria, Regina Caeli, Salve Regina—pick just one: perhaps the Magnificat, drawn from the gospel of Luke, in which Mary describes to her cousin Elizabeth her feelings of awe and blessedness at having been chosen to be the mother of Christ. Immediately we find fifty settings by Orlando di Lasso; sixteen by Palestrina; over five dozen by César Franck; twenty by Herbert Howells, and so on. The single publishing house Novello has over a hundred Magnificats in their current catalog. Why composers have returned to these texts again and again, and why Mary continues to inspire artists in all disciplines, is the subject for some longer essay; our hope tonight is merely to dip one toe (one ear?) into this immensely deep pool, and hear something of the variety and richness of Marian music from just the last five centuries.

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)—Bogoroditse Dievo [Ave Maria]

Stravinsky as a religious composer somehow comes as a surprise to many, but he certainly saw no conflict between his many musical outlets and his commitment to the Russian Orthodox church—a faith rekindled in his 40s, and marked by the composition of the Symphony of Psalms. Indeed, toward the end of his life, he seemed suspicious of composers who set religious texts without any personal investment: As he told his biographer Robert Craft, “Religious music without religion is almost always vulgar.” Bogoroditse Dievo was composed in 1934 and sets the Church Slavonic text that we would know as Hail Mary (or Ave Maria). Some years later, Stravinsky would adapt this composition to the traditional Latin text, transposing it up a whole step and adding a brief amen; we’ve chosen this evening to present his original version, in B flat.

Tomás Luis da Victoria (1548–1611)—Magnificat Primi Toni

This piece, the first of four settings of the Song of Mary on tonight’s program, was published by a relatively young Victoria in 1576, shortly after he had taken holy orders himself. Like most of the Magnificats that Victoria composed (eighteen in total, covering all the available keys), this
one alternates verses between plainchant and polyphony. An interesting thing happens as the polyphonic verses evolve from beginning to end. What we hear initially (Et exultavit) is free polyphony—all the parts composed anew, and moving at the same quick pace. In the third polyphonic section (Fecit potentiam), Victoria introduces one line of cantus firmus—the original chant tune, slowed down greatly, around which Victoria’s melodies must now fit their dance. With each subsequent polyphonic verse, the cantus firmus becomes more prominent: traded between parts, presented continuously in two parts, presented as a canon. The remaining voice parts, still freely composed and moving at a more rapid pace, become increasingly subservient to the cantus firmus, until by the end they have become mere colorative gestures, running in swift eighth notes from one great chord to another: less melodic, and more structural. (Not coincidentally, the ancient tune of the cantus firmus begins to dominate just as the text cites ancient prophecies: “As was promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed forever.” And the canon, one part following another at the interval of a fifth, is employed where the text describes generations following each other: “As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever, in worlds without end.”) While it is impossible to divine Victoria’s compositional intent after four centuries, it’s hard not to see the whole piece as a journey of faith: The initial polyphonic voices dance as if unaware of the chant that introduces them, but in subsequent passages those voices seem first to hear the chant, then to incorporate it, and ultimately to change their own character in response. We move from innocent freedom, to awareness of the ancient rules, to joyous submission.

**John Tavener** (b. 1944)—*A Hymn to the Mother of God*

The living composer John Tavener is a direct descendent of the English Renaissance giant John Taverner; Cerddorion has performed both composers’ works in recent years. The piece we sing tonight is a choral canon composed in memory of Tavener’s mother; he describes it as representing “the almost cosmic power attributed to the Mother of God by the Orthodox Church,” Tavener’s own chosen faith. The two choirs sing exactly the same music, but separated by three beats; depending on where you are seated in the church, you will either hear a distant premonition followed by the real thing, or a firm statement followed by a ghostly echo, or some equal combination of the two sounds, hovering in the air with an oddly undissonant but definitely polytonal effect.

**Herbert Howells** (1892–1983)—*Regina Caeli*

Howells has come to be seen as one of the most important English composers of the twentieth century. And his distinctively original style—
with long flowing lines, sweeping gestures, and surprising turns of harmony—is evident even in earlier works like *Regina Caeli* (published in 1915, when Howells was only 23 years old). The piece is scored for double choir: One choir presents a single, upward swell of melody, which the other answers with a chorale-like Alleluia, gradually growing to an ecstatic affirmation. The alternation of unison melody and harmonized response continues throughout the piece, with each choir taking turns at the various roles; as the piece begins to close, the central thematic melody becomes more and more reflective, private, and transformed.

**Arvo Pärt** (b. 1935)—*Magnificat*

Like Tavener, Pärt has established his reputation with a unique and instantly recognizable style; his music, even in its most dramatic moments, creates an atmosphere conducive to reverie. Pärt’s compositional system is something he calls tintinnabuli: One voice ranges between notes of the triad, while others move in stepwise fashion, creating passing dissonances that suggest no harmonic tension but rather co-exist in curious, unconcerned acceptance—as if, on some distant planet, these sounds were consonant. As still and restrained as it is on the local level, the music proves surprisingly expressive when taken in total. One example: The soprano soloist who appears on occasion throughout the piece sings just one pitch, the C above middle C—and yet the changing context makes her note ever new.

**Pierre Villette** (1926–1998)—*Hymne à la Vierge*

After the relatively sere qualities of our first half, we begin our second half with the lush, romantic, and quintessentially French music of Pierre Villette. Villette was a classmate of the avant garde composer and conductor Pierre Boulez, but his music could not be more different. In it, we hear the influence of his teacher Maurice Duruflé, along with hints of jazz and Gregorian chant. *Hymne à la Vierge* is perhaps his most famous and oft-performed motet, a setting of devotional poetry by his contemporary Roland Bouhéret; it has been featured several times on the annual broadcast of lessons and carols from King’s College, Cambridge.

**Thomas Attwood Walmisley** (1814–1856)—*Magnificat* (from the *Evening Service*)

Nothing could be more English than the name “Walmisley,” and nothing more thoroughly English than the music he produced. Walmisley was a professor of music at Cambridge, where he held simultaneous appointments at St. John’s and Trinity Colleges. In the Anglican liturgy, a
setting of the *Magnificat* (paired with the Song of Simeon, *Nunc Dimittis*) is sung every single day at evensong; as a result, composers have responded with an enormous variety of beautiful settings. This one has been a mainstay of the repertoire since its composition 150 years ago. Of particular note are the delicate harmonies of the central quartet, repeated by the full choir, on “He remembering his mercy,” and the glorious conclusion, in which entrances tumble one after another on the phrase “world without end.”

**Robert Parsons** (c. 1535–1572)—*Ave Maria*

A few composers have the unfortunate distinction of being well known for their manner of death. Lully famously stabbed himself in the foot while conducting; Webern was shot dead by Allied forces when he lit a cigar after curfew in post-war Germany; and Parsons set out to recruit choirboys one cold January day, fell into the River Trent, and drowned. He was succeeded at the Chapel Royal by William Byrd. Before his premature death (for he was only in his thirties), he contributed a wealth of consort music, secular songs, anthems, and settings of the liturgy. His *Ave Maria* is commonly performed today in A flat major, with relatively syllabic text declamation. (When to change syllables, and how often to repeat text, is not always clear in the surviving manuscripts of Renaissance music, and is generally a matter of editorial choice.) For this afternoon, we present a recent edition by Edward Tambling, who has preserved the original lower key of F major and generally stretches syllables across long phrases, rather than repeating text often. Listen for the sopranos, who float above the polyphony, presenting paired statements—a single-note phrase, followed by an answering cadential gesture—on increasingly higher pitches. They do not join the imitative texture of the other polyphonic parts until halfway through the piece, at the text *Benedicta tu in mulieribus*—“Blessed are you among all women.”

**Giles Swayne** (b. 1946)—*Magnificat I*

This piece is perhaps the most unusual on this afternoon’s program, and certainly the most virtuosic. Of its conception, the composer writes the following: “At the end of 1981 I had spent two months in Southern Senegal and The Gambia, researching and recording music of the Jola people of that region.... One of the songs I heard during this trip was a work song called “O Lulum” which I recorded in a small village called Badem Karantaba, about thirty miles southeast of the town of Ziguinchor in the Casamance region of southern Senegal. I used the opening call of this song to begin *Magnificat I*; it also returns as a refrain towards the end of the piece. This apart, the music is built up in polyrhythmic layers which
owe a great deal to the choral songs of the Ba-Benzélé pygmies of the Congo region.”

**Anton Bruckner** (1824–1896)—*Ave Maria*

We close our afternoon with a well-known and beloved setting of the most famous Marian prayer of all. Anton Bruckner’s version, for seven (and occasionally eight) voices, was composed in 1861, and moves from an initially delicate, almost hesitant tone to a full and ecstatic affirmation. Bruckner’s own devout faith shines through every bar.

*Robert Isaacs*
Bogoroditse Dievo (Ave Maria)
Igor Stravinsky

Bogoroditse Dievo, raduzsia,
Blagodatnaia Mariia, Gospod sToboiu.
Blagoslovenna Ty vjenach
I blagosloven plod tschreva Tvoiego iako
Spasa rodila iesi dusch naschich.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mother of God.
Mary full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
for thou hast borne the Savior of our souls.

Magnificat Primi Toni
Tomás Luis da Victoria

Magnificat anima mea Dominum,
et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salvare meo,
quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes,
quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,
et sanctum nomen eius,
et misericordia eius a progenies in progenies timentibus eum.
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles;
esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum,
recordatus misericordiae suae,
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros: Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all generations.
He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel
As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed forever.
Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A Hymn to the Mother of God
John Tavener

In You, O Woman full of Grace,
The angelic choirs, and the human race
All creation rejoices.
O Sanctified Temple, mystical Paradise,
And glory of Virgins
In You, O Woman full of Grace,
All creation rejoices.
All Praise be to You.

Regina Caeli
Herbert Howells

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia.
Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia.
Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia.
Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
For He whom you did merit to bear, alleluia.
Has risen, as He said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.

Magnificat
Arvo Pärt

Magnificat anima mea Dominum, et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutare meo,
quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes,
quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,
et sanctum nomen eius,
et misericordia eius a progenies in

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.
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Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,
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Deposuit potentes de sede
et exaltavit humiles;
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et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum,
recordatus misericordiae suae,
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros:
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.
Magnificat anima mea Dominum.

He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel
As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed forever.
My soul doth magnify the Lord.

Hymne à la Vierge
Pierre Villette

Ô toute belle Vierge Marie,
Votre âme trouve en Dieu
Le parfait amour
Il vous revêt du manteau de la
Grâce
Comme une fiancée
Parée de ses joyaux.
Alleluia, alleluia.
Je vais chanter
la louange, Seigneur,
Car tu as pris soin de moi,
Car tu m’as enveloppée
du voile de l’innocence.

You are beautiful Virgin Mary,
In God your soul discovers
Perfect love.
It cloaks you with the mantle of Grace
Like a betrothed
Adorned with her jewels.
Alleluia, alleluia.
I will sing
your praise, Lord,
for you have looked after me,
for you have covered me
with the veil of innocence.

Vous êtes née avant les collines
O sagesse de Dieu
Porte du Salut
Heureux celui qui marche dans vos traces
Qui apprête son coeur
A la voix de vos conseils.
Alleluia, alleluia.
Je vais chanter

You were born before the hills,
O wisdom of God,
The way to salvation.
Happy is he who walks in your footsteps,
who prepares his heart
To listen to your advice.
Alleluia, alleluia.
I will sing
ta louange, Seigneur,
Car tu m’as faite avant le jour,
Car tu m’as fait précéder
le jaillissement des sources.

Avant les astres vous étiez présente
Mère du Créateur
Au profond du ciel.
Quand Dieu fixait les limites du monde
Vous partagiez son coeur
Etant à l’œuvre avec lui.
Alléluia. O toute belle Vierge Marie.
—Roland Bouhéré

Magnificat (from the Evening Service)
Thomas Attwood Walmisley

My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is His Name.
And His mercy is on them that fear Him: throughout all generations.
He hath shewed strength with His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away.
He rememb’ring His mercy hath holpen His servant Israel
As He promised to our forefathers, Abraham and His seed forever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Ave Maria
Robert Parsons

Ave maria, gratia plena
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus
et benedictus fructus ventris tui.
Amen

Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Amen
Magnificat I  
*Giles Swayne*

Magnificat anima mea Dominum,  
et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutare meo,  
quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.  
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes,  
quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,  
et sanctum nomen eius,  
et misericordia eius a progenies in progenies timentibus eum.  
Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,  
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.  
Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles; esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes.  
Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae, sicut locutus est ad patres nostros: Abraham et semini eius in saecula.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.  

**Ave Maria**  
*Anton Bruckner*

Ave maria, gratia plena  
Dominus tecum.  
Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus  
Sancta Maria, mater Dei,  
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus,  
Hail Mary, full of grace,  
The lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women And Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus  
Holy Mary, mother of God, Pray for us sinners,
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. 
Amen. 

Now and at the hour of our death. 
Amen.
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<td>Eliza Bates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doug Keilitz</td>
<td>Mary Katherine Timme</td>
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<td>Christine King</td>
<td>Ruta Vaskys &amp; Martin Freed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel &amp; Eliana Catao de Korin</td>
<td>James Bessent</td>
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<td>Pamela Krute</td>
<td>Gretta Wren</td>
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<td>Kathleen Kuhlman</td>
<td>Liam Dailey</td>
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<td>Justine Fisher</td>
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<td>Richard Yaeger</td>
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Many thanks to Robb Moss and FloraCulture for the unique and beautiful florals.
Visit: www.floraculture-nyc.com

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