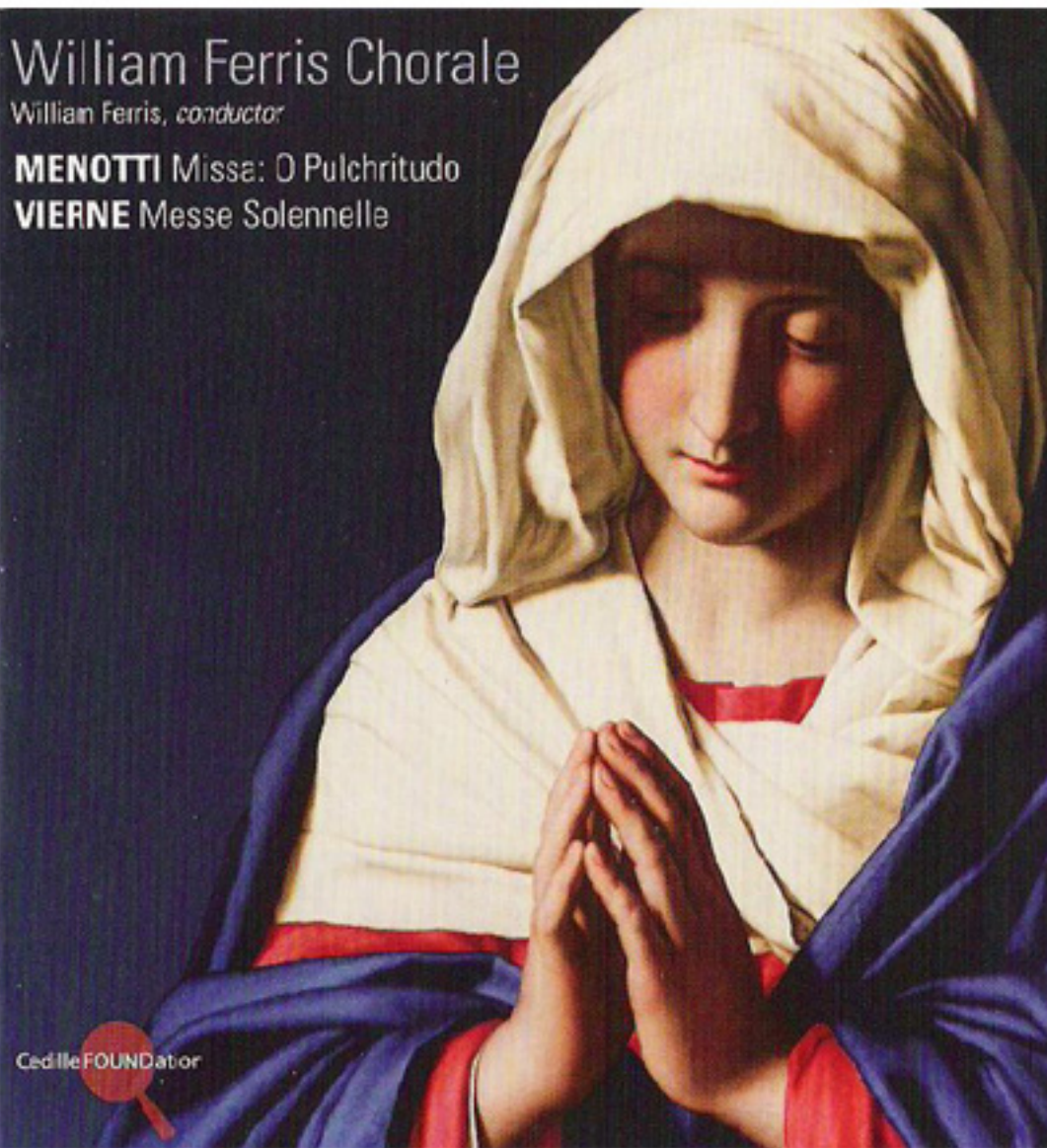


William Ferris Chorale

William Ferris, *conductor*

MENOTTI Missa: O Pulchritudo

VIERNE Messe Solennelle



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WILLIAM FERRIS CHORALE

William Ferris, conductor

Gian Carlo Menotti (b. 1911)

Missa "O Pulchritudo" (1979) (43:22)

Recorded in concert December 12, 1982 in Saint James Cathedral, Chicago, in the presence of the composer

- 1 Kyrie (7:42)
- 2 Gloria (7:45)
- 3 Motet: *O Pulchritudo* (5:54)
- 4 Sanctus and Benedictus (13:03)
- 5 Agnus Dei (3:42)

*Joan Gibbons, soprano
Deborah Fair, mezzo soprano
John Vorrasi, tenor
Thomas Sillitti, bass*

*William Ferris Chorale
Composer Festival Orchestra
William Ferris, conductor*

Louis Vieme (1870-1937)

Messe Solennelle, Op. 16 (1899) (29:12)

Recorded in concert May 20, 1968 in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Chicago

- 6 Kyrie (6:49)
- 7 Gloria (9:03)
- 8 Sanctus (2:31)
- 9 Benedictus (4:23)
- 10 Agnus Dei (6:09)

*Thomas Weistfog, grand organ
Dexter Bailey, choir organ*

*William Ferris Chorale
William Ferris, conductor*

TT: (72:47)

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

by John Vorrasi

Gian Carlo Menotti: *Missa "O Pulchritudo"*

"Bill, you love my *Missa* — you'll perform it for me, won't you?" an agitated Gian Carlo Menotti implored William Ferris. It was at that moment on a sweltering summer afternoon in Charleston, South Carolina, that Menotti, upset over the way another conductor was interpreting his *Missa*, inspired the performance captured on this disc. Ferris did indeed love the *Missa*, and his overtly passionate spirituality was a perfect match for Menotti's equally passionate yet covert one. Both men, each in his own way, shared the belief that beauty was a pathway to God.

Menotti's fame rests primarily on his operatic works, which include *The Consul*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *The Saint of Bleeker Street*, and *The Medium*. He has received two Pulitzer prizes, the New York Drama Circle Critic's Award, the Kennedy Center Honor for achievement in the Arts, and the universal admiration of audiences, if not of critics. His blending of contemporary storytelling with accessible, heartfelt music has helped keep opera a vibrant, living art form.

As Verdi did with the *Requiem*, Menotti turned his operatic skills to a large scale setting of the Catholic Mass, but with one telling exception: he replaced the Credo movement (the catalog of religious beliefs) with an adaptation of a passage from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, "O Eternity, ever ancient ever new, late have I loved You." This, coupled with the dedication of the work "In honor of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus," makes for an extremely compelling testament of faith.

Although Menotti feigned embarrassment at this assessment and even downplayed his own dedicatory inscription, the emotional intensity of his expression during the dress rehearsal of the *Missa* belied his words. I recall watching him closely as he sat in the darkened church

listening intently. At the climactic moment of the *Sandus* (a drum stroke on the phrase "heaven and earth are full of your glory") he fell forward to his knees, his head bowed down. I was truly moved at the sight: a man whose genius had created a work of profound beauty, humbled by a sense of Beauty itself.

Louis Vierne: Messe Solennelle, Op. 16

Perhaps it was because he was born nearly blind that Louis Vierne's music is so filled with color and imagination. Orphaned at an early age, Vierne completed his schooling in the provinces and eventually entered the Paris Conservatory, where he studied with César Franck and Charles-Marie Widor. He became the assistant organist at St. Sulpice in 1892 and, in 1900, was appointed organist at Notre Dame. Vierne was a brilliant virtuoso and had great success as a recitalist in both Europe and the United States. He was also a master of improvisation, and as early as 1895 had begun to compose in earnest.

The *Messe Solennelle*, Opus 16, for four part chorus and two organs, was written in 1899 to showcase the instruments and acoustics of Notre Dame. With its sweeping melodies and harmonic grandeur, the work has justifiably been called a triumphant counterpart to Fauré's *Requiem*.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in Chicago, while not on the architectural scale of Notre Dame, does have two magnificent pipe organs: a fully restored E. M. Skinner, and a tracker action Visser-Rowland. This performance of the Vierne *Messe* shows both the organs and the chorus in all their full-throated glory.

TEXTS

KYRIE

<i>Kyrie eleison.</i>	Lord, have mercy upon us.
<i>Christe eleison.</i>	Christ, have mercy upon us.
<i>Kyrie eleison.</i>	Lord, have mercy upon us.

GLORIA

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus Te, benedicimus Te, adoramus Te, glorificamus Te, gratias agimus Tibi propter magnam gloriam Tuam. Dominus Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus Pater Omnipotens. Domine fili unigenite, Jesu Christe. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris. Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis, Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis. Quoniam Tu solus sanctus, Tu solus Dominus, Tu solus altissimus: Jesu Christe, cum sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Gory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will. We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You, we give You thanks for Your great glory. Lord God. Heavenly King, God the Father almighty. Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son. Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. You are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For You alone are the holy one, You alone are the Lord. You alone are the Most High: Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

MOTET: O PULCHRITUDO

*O Pulchritudo, tam antiqua et tam nova, sero Te amavi.
Mecum eras, et tecum non eram.
Ea me tenebat longe a Te, quae si in Te non essent.
Vocasti et clamasti, et rupisti sorditatem meam.
Corrugasti, spem distulisti, et iugasti caecitatem meam.
O Pulchritudo, tetegisti me et exarsi in pacem Tuam.*

O Beauty, ever ancient ever new, late have I loved You.
You were always at my side, but I was far from You.
The pleasures of the world hid You from me, yet still
You called me, cried out to me, penetrating my deafness.
You shined brightly and your brilliance took away my blindness.
O Beauty, You touched me and I am consumed in your peace.

SANCTUS

*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.*

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest

BENEDICTUS

*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domine.
Hosanna in excelsis.*

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

AGNUS DEI

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.*

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

William Ferris (1937–2000) was a lifelong champion of contemporary composers. He and the **William Ferris Chorale**, which he founded in 1971 with tenor John Vorrasi, have been acclaimed for their concerts of music by Dominick Argento, Samuel Barber, John Corigliano, William Mathias, John McCabe, Gian Carlo Menotti, Steven Paulus, Vincent Persichetti, Ned Rorem, William Schuman, Leo Sowerby, William Walton, and many, many others, often with the composers as honored guests. The Chorale has performed at the Aldeburgh Festival and the Spoleto Festival: USA and has given over 175 world, American, and Chicago premieres of important new literature.

A distinguished composer in his own right, Ferris's music was commissioned and premiered by the Chicago and the Boston Symphony Orchestras. Among his compositions are two operas, numerous concert, symphonic and chamber works, hundreds of choral works, and dozens of songs. Northwestern University houses his complete musical archive. Ferris's sudden death, while conducting a rehearsal of the Verdi *Requiem*, shocked the music community. His was a unique and distinctive voice on the American music scene.

Joan Gibbons was a member of the William Ferris Chorale from 1979 until 1982. Since then her career has taken her to the grand opera stages of New York, Dallas, Seattle, Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco, and to Milwaukee's Florentine Opera, Opera Columbus, the Chautauqua Opera, Manila Opera, Pittsburgh and the Lake George Opera Festival, the Edmonton Opera, L'Opera de Nice, the San Diego and Santa Fe Operas, and the Opera Theatre of St. Louis.

Deborah Fair received her Masters in Opera Theatre from Oberlin Conservatory. She was a finalist in the regional Metropolitan Opera competition and received the National Opera Association award. She made her debut with the William Ferris Chorale in the 1982 season and went on to become a member of the chorus at Lyric Opera of Chicago. She is a featured performer on Lyric's world premiere recording of Hugo Weisgall's opera *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

John Vorrasi is known for his performances on the concert stage and for his work as a librettist and program annotator. He was a featured artist at the Aldeburgh Festival, the Spoleto Festival: USA, and at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music at the Vatican. In partnership with composer William Ferris, he helped create the William Ferris Chorale and now serves the ensemble's Artistic Director. His recitals, oftentimes with composers Ned Rorem, Lee Hoiby, or William Ferris as his accompanist, have been broadcast by the BBC, Radio Vaticana, and Chicago radio stations WNIB and WFMT. He has recorded on the Albany, CRI, and New World labels.

Thomas Sillitti was baritone soloist with the William Ferris Chorale from 1973 to 1985, during which time he premiered many of William Ferris's works. His New York recital debut took place in 1982 at Trinity Church, Wall Street. He has appeared as soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Florentine Opera of Milwaukee. A former member of the Voice Faculty of the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago, he studied in a series of intensive Master Classes with British baritone John Shirley-Quirk.

Thomas Weisflog has served as the William Ferris Chorale's Artist in Residence since 1983. He has appeared as featured soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on many occasions. He studied with Edward Mondello and Gavin Williamson in Chicago and with Norman Peterson at the Eastman School of Music. Weisflog serves as the organist for Rockefeller Memorial Chapel at the University of Chicago, Saint Thomas the Apostle Church, and Temple KAM Isaiah-Israel. He has recorded on the Meridian, Albany, and New World labels.

Winner of the 1972 Young Artists Competition, organist **Dexter Bailey** studied with Janice Beck, Stella Roberts, William Browning, and Catherine Crozier. In 1988 and again in 1990, he was invited by Marie-Claire Alain to the Bach Institute in St. Donat, France, where he played concerts that were broadcast live by the French National Radio Network.

ABOUT THE ORGANS

The historic E. M. Skinner pipe organ in Mount Carmel Church was built in 1928 by the prestigious E. M. Skinner Organ Company and was one of the last installations personally supervised by Skinner himself. Particularly noted for its large scale pipes and extensive tonal range, the 54 rank, three manual organ has been restored to its original magnificence by the firm of Fabry Pipe Organs, Inc. The restoration was significant in that the instrument was not altered, only returned to its original tonal specifications. As such, it is one of very few unaltered Skinner instruments in existence.

In November 1987, as the result of a bequest from Helen Kellogg, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church acquired a mechanical action pipe organ built especially for it by one of the world's premiere organ builders, Visser-Rowland Associates of Houston, Texas. From its splendid design and hand carved casework to its exquisite tonal specifications, it reflects the genius of master craftsman Pieter Visser. The individual stops, under low wind pressure, allow for a wide range of expression. The sweet flutes and singing principals are crowned by a brilliant copper trumpet.

The organs are maintained by Fabry Pipe Organs, Inc.

ORGAN SPECIFICATIONS

E. M. SKINNER Grand Organ

Great Division	
Double Diapason	15'
First Diapason	8'
Second Diapason	8'
Harmonic Flute	8'
Octave	4'
Flute	4'
Twelfth	2 2/3'
Fifteenth	2'
Harmonics	8'
Tromba	8'
Carion	4'
Great Choir Chimes	
Swell Division	
Diapason	8'
Rohrflute	8'
Flauto Dolce	8'
Flute Celeste	8'
Salicional	8'
Voix Celeste	8'
Octave	4'
Flute (triangular)	4'
Flautino	2'
Mixture	V
Waldhorn	16'
Trumpet	8'
Carion	4'
Oboe d'Amore	8'
Celesta	
Zimbelstern	
Tremolo	

Choir Division	
Gamba	16'
Concert Flute	8'
Gamba	8'
Gamba Celeste	8'
Dulciana	8'
Flute	4'
Gimlette	4'
Nazard	2 2/3'
Clarinet	8'
Orchestral Oboe	8'
French Horn	8'
Tuba Mirabilis	8'
Celesta	
Harp	
Tremolo	
Pedal Division	
Oper Diapason	16'
Diapason (Great)	16'
Conte Bass	16'
Bombard	16'
Gamba (Choir)	16'
Octave	8'
Gedackt	8'
Cello	8'
Super Octave	4'
Trombone	16'
Tromba	8'
Unusatz	32'

VISSER-HOWLAND Choir Organ

Manual I	
Coupler	
Manual II Hauptwerk	
Prinzipal	8'
Rohrflute	8'
Oktav	4'
Nachton	4'
Waldflute	2'
Terz	1 3/5'
Mixtur	1 1/3'
Trompette	8'
Zimbelstern	
Manual II Brustwerk	
Gemshorn	8'
Gemshorn Celeste	8'
Prinzipal	4'
Blockflute	4'
Oktav	2'
Jar got	1 1/3'
Scharf	1 1/3'
Rohrschalmey	8'
Tremulant	
Pedal	
Subbass	16'
Prinzipal	8'
Choralbass	4'
Fagott	16'



William Ferris and Gian Carlo Menotti at the Arts Club of Chicago, March 1981

Photo courtesy of John Tomasi