

SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG

Choral Music for Today's Worship by American Composers
sung by the MID-AMERICA CHORALE John Dexter, director

THE GREAT DAY OF THE LORD, Op. 28a (1956/60) — ALAN STOUT **for Mixed Chorus with Organ LARRY SMITH (organ).**

ALAN STOUT (b. Baltimore, Md., 1932) studied composition with Henry Cowell, and unquestionably these studies have borne fruit in both the quantity and enormous stylistic range of Mr. Stout's works. These include eight string quartets, a symphony, Three Hymns for orchestra, a piano quintet, clarinet quintet, and violin sonata, as well as two masses, smaller choral works, and songs in a variety of languages, including those of Scandinavia where Mr. Stout pursued study and research during the middle 1950's. Stylistically speaking, Mr. Stout's compositions cover the whole range of possible musics — from oriental and medieval to post-Webernian in both its strictly ordered and aleatoric aspects. *The Great Day of the Lord* falls quite definitely into the former of these categories. Based on a prophetic text form in the Old Testament Book of Zephaniah, the music was completed in 1956 and revised in 1960.

PSALM 98: O Sing unto the Lord a New Song (1955) — HALSEY STEVENS **for 3-part Chorus of Treble Voices and Piano — LARRY SMITH (piano).**

HALSEY STEVENS (b. Scott, N.Y., 1908), though, trained in his native New York State, has pursued the greater part of his distinguished career as composer, teacher, and author on the Pacific coast, where he has been Head of the Composition Department at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. His *Life and Music of Béla Bartók* has remained the definitive English-language volume on that Hungarian master since its publication in 1953; and beginning with the 1946 performance of his First Symphony (CRI 129), Mr. Stevens has achieved unquestioned standing as one of our major composers. Besides the already-mentioned First Symphony, other major Stevens works on records include the Louisville-commissioned *Triskelion* (1953) and *Sinfonia Breve* (1957) (LOU 545 545-1, 593), as well as the *Symphonic Dances* (1958) (CRI 166). The one Halsey Stevens vocal work recorded heretofore has been the madrigal, *Like as the Culver on the Baréd Bough* (CRI 102). Stylistically, Stevens' music can best be called "modern-classic"; but for all its emphasis on linearity and closely-reasoned structure, its idiom is distinctly American as opposed to a depersonalized cosmopolitanism. His setting of the jubilant lines of *Psalm 98* is an instance in point. The music was completed in November of 1955 and is inscribed to the Marylhurst College Chorus, Sister M. Claudia, Director.

SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG (1952) — NORMAND LOCKWOOD **for Mixed Chorus unaccompanied.**

NORMAND LOCKWOOD (b. New York City, 1906), presently composer-in-residence at the University of Denver, has enjoyed a long and distinguished career as composer and teacher. His early studies were at the University of Michigan School of Music, and he continued work in Europe with Nadia Boulanger and Ottorino Respighi. Save for the period 1945-53, when he was on the faculty of Columbia University in New York, the greater part of Mr. Lockwood's professional activity has been associated with western and mid-western colleges and universities. As composer he has been recipient of dozens of major commissions and awards, and his catalog of works is both large and varied, with choral works and chamber scores predominating. He has also written two operas, *The Scarecrow* (1945) and *Early Dawn* (1961). Among Lockwood's previously recorded works have been *Concerto for Organ and Brasses* (1951), *Quiet Design for organ* (1954), and *Inscriptions from the Catacombs* (1935).

Sing unto the Lord a New Song is Lockwood's vigorous and polyphonically-rhythmically most effective setting of the opening verse of *Psalm 96*.

AD TE LEVAVI (“Unto the Father”) (1959) — GORDON BINKERD
for 4-part Chorus of Mixed Voices a cappella.

GORDON BINKERD (b. Lynch, Neb., 1916) began his professional music career as pianist and teacher, and only in his middle twenties did he turn seriously toward musical composition. Before World War II he studied with Bernard Rogers at the Eastman School of Music and after wartime Navy service he worked with Walter Piston at Harvard. By 1949 he was teaching at the University of Illinois, but only in 1951-52 did he feel ready to bring his compositions to public view — most notably his orchestral piece, *Sun Singer*. Since then, Binkerd has composed four symphonies, a pair of string quartets, a 'Cello Sonata, and a Piano Sonata — all notable for both their contrapuntal craftsmanship and intrinsic vitality. The same holds for the nearly two dozen sacred and secular choral works that have come from his pen, of which the *Ad Te levavi* is a typical example. *Psalm 25* in its Latin version has provided the text as sung; but the English translation as given here is the composer's own.

MOTECTUS ad libitum ad OFFERTORIUM
from Missa “Domus Aurea”, Op. 40 (1957) — RUSSELL WOOLLEN
for 4-part Male Choir a cappella.

RUSSELL WOOLLEN (b. Hartford, Conn., 1923) was ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in 1947. His musical studies were at the Pope Pius X School of Liturgical Music in New York, with organist Ernest White, and with Dr. Franz Wasner; and after his ordination he went abroad to study at Solesmes and with Nadia Boulanger and Nicholas Nabokov. His final musical studies were with Walter Piston at Harvard. While fulfilling his ecclesiastical vocation Woollen as composer has developed a dual musical language — one exploratory-modern, and reserved chiefly for secular works; the other traditional ecclesiastic, in which he has sought to reconcile the writing of music for contemporary use in the Roman Catholic Church with the tenets set forth by Pope Pius X in his *Motu proprio* encyclical of 1903. In recent years, Woollen has sought to integrate his two styles. His catalog of compositions includes much music for Church use, as well as a setting for chorus of Milton's *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, a symphony, and several major chamber and solo works including a Harpsichord Suite, a Flute Quartet, a Piano Trio, and a Suite for High Voice on Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins.

The *Motectus* recorded here is the central piece of Woollen's *Missa “Domus Aurea”* for men's choir and organ and is the only section written *a cappella*. It is a setting of the Litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

GLORY BE TO GOD — Motet for Christmas Day (1955) — DANIEL PINKHAM
for Double Chorus unaccompanied.

DANIEL PINKHAM (b. Lynn, Mass., 1923) has achieved renown as composer, harpsichordist, choral director, and teacher. His composition teachers have included Walter Piston, Aaron Copland, Arthur Honegger, Samuel Barber, and Nadia Boulanger; while his keyboard mentors have been Wanda Landowska for harpsichord and E. Power Biggs for organ. Among his many teaching and conducting positions of distinction, perhaps that which holds special prestige is the post of musical director at King's Chapel in Boston, which dates back in point of time to 1777, when William Selby held the position.

Pinkham's catalog of compositions includes a symphony (recorded and scheduled for 1965 release on the Louisville Orchestra First Editions label), a sizeable sheaf of choral works, chamber works with harpsichord (several of which have been recorded on the CRI label), and much else. As

might be expected of a practicing contemporary musician who as performer is much concerned with baroque, renaissance, and pre-renaissance music, a considerable number of Pinkham's works reflect an inner compulsion to explore the common ground between the ancient and modern styles. Thus it is that *Glory be to God* echoes in certain of its phrases the organum-cum-bell patterns that one associates with the Perotin and the 13th century successors to the Notre-dame School.

PSALM 23 (1957-58) — ELLIS KOHS

Motet for Double Mixed Chorus and soprano, alto, tenor, baritone soli, a cappella.

ELLIS B. KOHS (b. Chicago, Ill., 1916) began his musical studies on the West coast, but made his way to the East where he worked with Bernard Wagenaar and Olga Samaroff Stokowski at Juilliard in New York and with Walter Piston and others at Harvard. However, soon after Kohs entered military service in 1941, his Concerto for Orchestra was played at the 1942 ISCM Festival at Berkeley, California, and with success sufficient to assure his post-war vocation. The Chamber Concerto for Viola and Strings (1949), the First Symphony (1950) (CRI 104), the Short Concert for String Quartet (1948) (CRI 176) are among the Kohs scores that have found their way to LP discs and they reflect his earnest searching for a personal manner of musical speech in a time when so many styles have been explored and exposed so potently by such masters as Stravinsky, Hindemith, and Bartók that the lot of a "young and promising" contemporary composer is today no easy one. The 31-year-old Kohs who set to paper the elaborate setting of the *Twenty third Psalm* recorded here was by then well established as composer and in his post on the faculty of the University of Southern California; but there is still evident here a struggle between a stern intellectual compulsion and a need for passionate expression — whether the latter be in terms of musical dynamics, decorative detail, or elaborate and closely woven harmonic texture. The Kohs psalm setting is divided into six sections, in the first and last of which the full double chorus is heard, while in between soloists in varied distribution play their leading roles.

PROPHECY (1948; rev. 1952) — JACOB AVSHALOMOV

for Chorus, Cantor and Organ

Charles Matheson (tenor), Arline Maher (soprano), Larry Smith (organ).

JACOB AVSHALOMOV (b. 1919, Tsingtao, China) is the son of Siberian-born Aaron Avshalomov. Though he received early musical training from his father, Jacob's initial activities on his own were in the field of industry rather than music; but in 1937, while helping his father in Shanghai with parts and scores, the decision was made in favor of music. Japanese invasion forced the Avshalomov family (Jacob's mother was a San Franciscan) to move to the United States. Here Jacob studied at Reed College in Portland, Ore., and played in the Portland Junior Symphony of which he is presently conductor. There were further studies with Bernard Rogers at the Eastman School of Music, then war service with the China desk of the O.S.S.

After the war came an Alice M. Ditson composition fellowship and a stint of teaching at Columbia University, and in 1954 his assumption of the conductorship of the Portland Junior Symphony. As composer, Avshalomov has written such highly evocative scores as *The Taking of Tung Kwan* (CRI 117), the much-acclaimed choral work *Tom O'Bedlam*, and *Phases of the Great Land* (CRI 194), as well as the Naumburg Award winning Sinfonietta (recorded on Columbia MS 6089/ML5412).

Prophecy was composed in 1948 for the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York and was premiered there in May of 1948. The music bears a dedication "To the memory of Moise Ash," and the text from the 11th and 12th chapters of Isaiah suggests undoubted inspiration from the founding of the State of Israel which took place in 1948.

NOTES BY D. H.

THE MID-AMERICA CHORALE was created in 1962 under the terms of a Ford Foundation grant to its director, John Dexter — the aim being the commissioning of six new choral works of a religious nature and the organization of a group of professional singers to perform them. The thirty-three singers of the Mid-America Chorale were selected from the finest talent available in the mid-west and they have been heard extensively in concert, as well as on a CBS-TV telecast. Among the composers whose work has been commissioned for performance by the Mid-America Chorale have been William Bergsma, Gordon Binkerd, Jacob Avshalomov, Thomas Wagner, and Carden Burnham.

JOHN DEXTER is organist and choirmaster of the Plymouth Congregational Church and of Tifereth Israel Synagogue in Des Moines, Iowa. A graduate of the University of Michigan where he was an organ major, Mr. Dexter carried out further studies with Everett Titcomb in Boston and with Marcel Dupré in Paris. Before coming to Des Moines, he held important church music and choral directing positions in Hollywood, California, and Grand Rapids, Michigan. Besides his church music posts in Des Moines, Mr. Dexter has served as Musical Director for the Friends of Music, Inc. and of the Des Moines Community Playhouse.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)