

**RICHARD YARDUMIAN**  
**COME, CREATOR SPIRIT**  
**A New Mass in English**

**Lili Chookasian, mezzo-soprano**  
**Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia Chorale; Robert Page, director**  
**Members of the Fordham University Glee Club;**  
**James B. Welch, director**  
**Members of the Thomas More College Women's Chorale;**  
**James Kurtz, director**  
**Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia; Anshel Brusilow, conductor**

Apart from its strictly musical value, the Yardumian Mass offers the modern Church a highly professional example of contemporary music for worship. Since Vatican Council II some misunderstanding has arisen about the needs of the moment. Granted, the Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy places its greatest stress on participation in worship and in sacred song. Here the Yardumian Mass is most useful; it calls for participation by the congregation. However, the Constitution calls for choral music, too, inviting composers to “feel that their vocation is to cultivate sacred music and increase its store of treasures ...” and to create works for large choirs and also “for the needs of small choirs and for the active participation of the entire assembly of the faithful” (Paragraph 121).

Too often in the recent past we have encountered if not resistance at least passivity with regard to the need for serious musical compositions. If, as the Constitution insists, the purpose of liturgical music is to “express prayerfulness winningly, promote solidarity and enrich sacred rites with heightened solemnity,” we can be satisfied with nothing less than the best, regardless of the style used. It is, thus, a total misrepresentation of the Constitution to act as though “art” music were no longer needed. If anything, it is more needed today than ever in the past several hundred years. Now that the vernacular is increasingly used in Catholic liturgy, a vacuum must be filled. So long as our liturgy was celebrated only in Latin, we had some excuse for taking refuge in the masterpieces of the past. Today, on the other hand, we need new liturgical music of quality, and we need it desperately. Vacuum or opportunity is the option open to us. Instead of despairing, Fordham University wisely commissioned a distinguished American composer to grasp the opportunity.

If, as Stravinsky once expressed it to me in an interview, the advent of the vernacular is properly used, we may well see a new golden age of sacred music. No one would suggest that a single Mass creates a golden age. However, if this example is taken as a signal to other composers and to institutions who are able to grant commissions, the time may come when we can look back on this Mass as marking the start of a very fruitful age indeed.

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the new English vernacular Roman Catholic liturgy.

Richard Yardumian's MASS: COME, CREATOR SPIRIT was commissioned by Fordham University in 1965 to commemorate its 125th anniversary. It is the first Mass setting by an established American composer which reflects the 1963 decision of the Ecumenical Council in Rome permitting the Mass to be said in the English vernacular. This decree was the result of the Council's new constitutional requirement for congregational participation in the worship service. Yardumian's MASS is constructed around a simple setting of the hymn, "Veni, Creator Spiritus," which may be sung by the congregation (*vox populi*). This hymn from Vespers for Pentecost underlies four of the five sections of the MASS. A tenth-century Armenian liturgical melody, "Soorp, Soorp," ("Holy, Holy") is used as the basis of the Sanctus.

The MASS was premiered at a concert sponsored by Fordham for the occasion at Philharmonic Hall in New York on March 31, 1967. The recording was made the following day.

YARDUMIAN, born in Philadelphia on April 5, 1917, is a largely self-taught composer, who did not undertake any formal study of music until his early twenties. It was about this time that his work came to the attention of Jose Iturbi and Leopold Stokowski, who encouraged his compositional development through further study. In 1945, Yardumian received his first public performance when the Philadelphia Orchestra (Eugene Ormandy conducting) premiered his *Desolate City*. During the following twenty years, he maintained a close association with the Philadelphia Orchestra, which premiered ten of his works, made four recordings, and gave numerous performances of his compositions in the United States and abroad.

Since the early 1960's, Yardumian has focused his creative efforts on several large works which express a deep commitment to his religion. As music director of The Lord's New Church Which Is Nova Hierosolyma (a Swedenborgian Church in Bryn Athyn, Pa.), he has spent many years studying, selecting, and arranging ancient hymn and liturgical melodies for use in the service of worship. His knowledge and interest in the musical heritage of the church are evident not only in the extensive use of melodic resources, but also of the compositional techniques and formal plans of the sixteenth century and Baroque. These form the basis of the MASS and most of his later works including *The Story of Abraham*, a multi-media oratorio for orchestra, large chorus, and four soloists, and several chorale preludes for orchestra.

The MASS: COME, CREATOR SPIRIT relies largely on quoted melodies for its thematic material. Chants from the Ordinary of the Roman Catholic Mass play an important role in each of the sections (Kyrie III, Gloria III, Credo V, and Agnus Dei III, respectively). In addition to "Veni, Creator Spiritus" and "Soorp, Soorp," other melodies from the Catholic and Armenian liturgies, as well as folk tunes from Armenia and England, are used throughout in a variety of settings.

The straightforward presentation of "Veni, Creator Spiritus" by the *vox populi* (sung by a second mixed chorus for concert performance) illustrates treatment of the chant as an isolated unit of the texture, which closely adheres to the pitch content and fluid rhythmic style of its original form. This type of chant statement is also found in the choir and particularly the solo. However, the voices are most often set in a polyphonic texture of interwoven countermelodies, which often display rhythmic and pitch alterations. The orchestral instruments are also frequently involved in soloistic statements of motivic fragments or complete themes. Various traditional contrapuntal devices, such as imitation, inversion, augmentation and diminution are used extensively in a twentieth-century setting.

The polyphonic sections of the work are contrasted with occasional homophonic harmonizations of preexistent or original melodies. The unaccompanied chorale-like passages of the choir are reserved for particularly effective moments in the drama of the MASS. However, the polyphonic texture which predominates is most characteristic of Yardumian's later style. He defines his music as "polymodal," where the preexistent melodies and original themes, each in its own mode, simultaneously juxtapose in

a contrapuntal relationship.

While the music is essentially linear, the vertical structures conform to the harmonic system which Yardumian has evolved throughout his career. Originating from a concept of four-note chords (“quadrads”) built of thirds on alternating white and black keys of the piano, the system has progressed from the chromatic context of the earlier works to the present modal context. The third-relationship within the quadrad is also apparent at larger levels of structure. Entries of imitative voices often occur on the third-related pitches of the quadrad. Predominant tonal motion also involves third-related key areas. Through a combination of ancient modal melodies in the vertical context of the quadradic system, Yardumian has evolved a unique harmonic language with which the common bond of spirituality among men is profoundly expressed.

Note musicologist, Hans Moldenhauer writes, “Yardumian's handling of tonal and formal idioms and techniques . . . is always filtered through, and tempered by, an abiding sense for that which is lasting, a clairvoyance for the timeless and, therefore, a reverence for that which has endured through the ages. His creative work is convincing enough — by virtue of its integrity, spiritual fervor and power to communicate the essence of devotion in all its nuances from praise to supplication — that it knows to supersede the dogmatic lines of demarcation still separating men of essentially like faith and of the same good will.”

COME, CREATOR SPIRIT is dedicated to “the greater glory of God.”

Notes by Mary K. Loiselle

This recording originally appeared on the RCA label, produced by Howard Scott and recorded by Paul Goodman. It appears on CRI as part of its ongoing program of reissuing deleted recordings of fine music.

LORD, HAVE MERCY (Kyrie)

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

GLORY (Gloria)

Glory to God in the highest.

And on earth peace 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, who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

You, who take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.

You, who sit at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are holy.

You alone are Lord.

You alone, O Jesus Christ, are most high,

With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

## CREED (Credo)

I believe in one God.

The father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible  
and invisible.

And I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. Born of the Father before all  
ages.

God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God.

Begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father.

By whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.

And he became flesh by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary: and was made man.

He was also crucified for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried. And on the third day he rose  
again, according to the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

And of his kingdom there will be no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and  
the Son.

Who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, and who spoke through the  
prophets.

And one holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church,

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

And I await the resurrection of the dead.

And the life of the world to come. Amen.

## HOLY BLESSING (Sanctus)

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts.

Heaven and earth are filled with your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

## LAMB OF GOD (Agnus Dei)

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

*(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*