

Music Blurbs for 11-4-18

News & Notes

This week in music we'll be singing "For all the saints," "I sing a song of the saints of God," and at 10:30 we'll bring a little of New Orleans to us with "When the saints go marching in." The choir will sing "Ain't That Good News," and Moses Hogan's arrangement of "Hear My Prayer." Organ music will include Marcel Dupre's "Cortege and Litanie."

8:00 a.m.

Today's hymn, "For all the saints" is universally recognized as one of, if not the, greatest hymns of the 20th century. The text was written by an Anglican bishop, William How, and first appeared in the publication *Hymns for Saints Days and Other Hymns by a Layman* in 1864 (London). The "layman" was its publisher, the second Earl Nelson. It was matched with a tune called SARUM and made its way into the Episcopal Church's hymnal of 1871. Three of the original verses honored the Apostles, Evangelists, and Martyrs reflected the fifth verse of the text of the *Te Deum*. The 1871 version cut these from the hymn and made it into a new hymn altogether, leaving "For all the saints" with its present eight verses.

The music that we know today was composed for the *English Hymnal* of 1906 by Ralph Vaughn Williams. It is one of four original hymn tunes that he composed for that hymnal, of which he was the music editor. While much Victorian hymnody relied on four part harmony with rather flat melodic lines, Williams preferred beautiful sweeping unison melodies accompanied by the organ of which this is a shining example. The tune is entitled SINE NOMINE, meaning "without name" for the countless saints who are unnamed and known only to God. In the US, the text and tune first appeared together in the Episcopal church's 1940 edition of *The Hymnal* but even then it was a second tune (the first still being SARUM). Forty years later when *The Hymnal 1982* was published it had become impossible to think of this text without Williams' tune.

10:30 a.m.

The origins of "When the Saints Go Marching In" is unclear. It seems to have evolved in the early 1900s from many songs of similar name. The first recording was in 1923 on the Paramount label by the Paramount Jubilee Singers. No attribution was given for a composer. The song continued to be recorded in the 20s and the earlier versions were performed in a slow and stately manner. As time went on, it gradually became performed as a "hot" jazz number and associated with New Orleans. Louis Armstrong was one of the first performers to turn it into a nationally known popular song. He was part of a New Orleans tradition of turning religious songs into upbeat jazz numbers. Armstrong confessed that his sister wrote to him disapproving of turning church songs into secular pieces—that it was inappropriate and irreligious.

As with many folk songs, there's no one right set of verses and it rather invites new verses to be made. In general, the imagery of many of the verses is apocalyptic and taken from the book of Revelation. The song expresses the wish to go to heaven, picturing the saints going marching in through the Pearly Gates. It is entirely appropriate for funerals or celebrations of All Saints.