

Music Blurbs for 12-1-19: Advent 1

News and Notes:

This Sunday we celebrate the beginning of Advent. Today's organ music are different settings by Bach of the Lutheran Advent hymn "Savior of the Nations, come." We will sing "O come, O come, Emmanuel," and "People, look East." The choir will sing "Hark, the glad sound," by David Thorne, and Dylan Nohilly will sing "The People That Walked in Darkness" from Handel's *Messiah*.

Sunday Bulletins

Today's organ music is based on the Lutheran Advent hymn NUN KOMM DER HEIDEN HEILAND (Savior of the nations, come). This is one of Luther's earliest hymns, written before Advent of 1523. By the next year it appeared in three Lutheran hymnals. The text is a translation of the fourth century Ambrosian Advent hymn "Veni redemptor omnium."

When Luther translated the text, he also took the plainchant associated with the text. He eliminated the melismas (long flowing lines on one syllable) and altered it to the syllabic stresses of the German language. He converted it from a plainchant to a Lutheran chorale, a hymn style that congregations would feel comfortable singing.

The hymn was used by German immigrants in the United States as early as the 18th century but never found its way into an Episcopal hymnal until the present *Hymnal 1982*. While we do not sing it often, it is the basis of much organ music. Bach made at least four different organ settings as well as a cantata based on it. In the prelude Bach uses the technique called ornamented chorale. Not unlike jazz, the tune is decorated to almost beyond recognizable; it's a springboard for creative exploration of the tune's musical possibilities.

In the postlude, the upper three voices play in counterpoint on a disjointed sounding theme. The disjointedness represents the world without the Savior. Then the hymn melody arrives, simply stated in the bass. The answer to the disjointedness of the world is simple: Jesus Christ is coming to redeem the world.