

Holy, Holy, Holy

CD by The National Christian Choir

Thoughts on the CD and its contents

by Music Director, Dr. C. Harry Causey

Whether you prefer majestic praise or intimate adoration, you will find this collection of 12 hymns and anthems a wonderful enhancement to your times of worship. God's holiness is a foundational truth in our faith, and every selection on this CD will help you focus on that attribute of our Heavenly Father.

Holy, Holy, Holy – Our God is Three Persons in One – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is probably no better hymn to capture that theological truth – along with His holiness – than this one. It was written in the early 1800's by Reginald Heber, a highly respected Christian leader and the author of numerous hymns. He died at the age of 43. A year later, his widow published a collection containing 57 of his devotional poems including this one. John Dykes set it to music in 1861. I love this hymn when it's a full blown hymn of triumph. I also love it when it's a quiet, introspective worship song. Why not all of the above in one arrangement?

Holy Is the Lord (arr. Manuel) - This opens with Franz Schubert's lovely tone poem, "Holy Is the Lord," refers to John Dykes "Holy, Holy, Holy," and then builds in intensity with another song of unknown origin. Three songs, all of which point to our Triune God Who is holy, holy, holy.

Holy Is the Lord (arr. Holcomb) – Same name, but a totally different piece. I started not to include it on this CD because of potential confusion. I believe that as you listen, however, you will discover how worshipful this anthem is and why I felt compelled to include it. There are two endings offered by the composer – one big and one quiet. I could not decide which I liked better, so I used both of them by offering a reprise of the song at the end of this CD using the quiet ending.

And Can It Be – Ovid Young is a consummate choral arranger and orchestrator. This is one of his stellar accomplishments. In my Presbyterian background, I had never heard this hymn until I was in my mid thirties. A Southern Baptist preacher was a guest in our pulpit and requested we use "And Can It Be" that Sunday. Wow! What had I been missing?! Charles Wesley wrote the hymn after a crisis in his life that involved sickness of both body and spirit. He reported in his diary a vision and wrote, "At midnight I gave myself up to Christ: assured I was safe, sleeping or waking. I had continued experience of His power to overcome all temptation; and confessed, with joy and surprise, that He was able to do exceedingly abundantly for me, above what I can ask or think." To that, I say Amen!

Interlude #1 – My hope is that you will listen to this CD from start to finish without interruption. With that in mind, I created a few instrumental interludes with the desire of capturing melodies and moments you have already heard, remind you of them, then lead you to what follows.

He Leadeth Me – On another CD, we have a different arrangement of this hymn. I said there what I say here. This was inspired by Psalm 23 – probably the most treasured of the Psalms. I love the flow of this musical setting. It's very pastoral. I also love the gentle use of the vibraphone in the orchestration. Another favorite part of the anthem is the well grafted *a cappella* portion in the middle.

O Worship the King – Like a coronation, the brass ushers us into the royal chambers for an audience with our King. In America, we neither understand nor appreciate fully the idea of a monarch. As

Christians, however, we are part of a divine Kingdom. Listen for the eloquent texts and the wonderful acclamations of our God as King, Shield, Defender, Ancient of Days, Maker, Redeemer, and Friend.

Brethren, We Have Met to Worship - This is simply fun! It's fun to sing, to conduct, to orchestrate, and to hear. I really enjoyed the orchestration process, especially learning to use a xylophone effectively.

More Love to Thee, O Christ – Elizabeth Printiss lost two of her three children in a short period of time. Her grief was overwhelming. She penned an emotional poem shortly following her loss:

One child and two green graves are mine,
This is God's gift to me;
A bleeding, fainting, broken heart,
This is my gift to Thee.

During her period of sorrow, she also wrote "More Love to Thee." She didn't share it with anyone until she showed it to her husband 13 years later. It found its way into print about the time of a great spiritual revival in America in the late 1860's. From that time unto now, it has comforted countless Christians with its truly inspired expression of faith.

Interlude #2 – If you are listening to this entire CD at once, you may have forgotten our theme – the holiness of God.

All Creatures of Our God and King – All Creation sings to God – from every corner of the earth, under the seas, and the furthest reaches of the Universe. That's the message, and you are invited to join. The National Christian Choir sang in the Holy Land in 2008 during the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the founding of modern Israel. We invited singers from around our country to join us. The massed choir sang this anthem in Jerusalem as the first song of our concert that night. It is a great memory.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God – The opening makes me think of a sunrise. It's when the sun breaks through that the voices join the orchestra for this great proclamation by Martin Luther who paraphrased Psalm 46. Our victory over Satan is vividly underscored, and God's mighty strength is the exclamation point. I love the abundant energy of Mark Hayes' updated arrangement.

Reprise: Holy Is the Lord – You may remember that I told you I used the optional quiet ending of this worshipful song at the conclusion of this CD. It begins as if the choir is in the Outer Court and walking into the throne room to meet with our Holy Lord. It ends with a confession of our lips and our hearts: Jesus is Lord.