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Magnify the Lord

CD by The National Christian Choir

Thoughts on the CD and its contents

by Music Director, Dr. C. Harry Causey

This is one of my favorite CDs of The National Christian Choir because it contains a huge variety of selections, and some of them are very high on my list of favorites. We made this recording before we started trying to have a theme uniting all the titles – thus the great variety.

Alleluia (with Narration) – Randall Thompson’s classic anthem – a favorite of choirs for decades – consists of one word: “Alleluia” (meaning “praise the Lord.”). Without doubt, this anthem stands alone and is greatly loved by trained musicians. However, I had a concern that perhaps laymen might not appreciate listening nearly six minutes of our singing just one word. So, rightly or wrongly, I added a narration containing the inspiring reading “One Solitary Life” and the Christology passage from the book of Colossians. I saved the stirring climax and reverent ending for the listener to enjoy without the narration, and I believe the result is very satisfying.

At the Name of Jesus – From another wonderful Scripture comes another wonderful anthem by Cindy Berry. The second half of this anthem takes you from the outer court to the inner court.

Dry Bones (with Narration) – When I was a lad, the great choral director, Fred Waring, made this incredibly creative, insanely delightful spiritual famous through his concerts, recordings, and television program. It’s hard to know what was more fun for me – orchestrating it, conducting it, listening to it, or watching our interpreter for the hearing impaired, Mary Abernathy, sign it from the top of her head to the bottom of her toes.

How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place – On my first visit to the Holy Land, I stood on the Mt. of Olives and looked down on the Holy City of Jerusalem for the first time. I was swept away in awe. Gazing at the area where the Temple used to stand, I remembered this Psalm which was sung by worshipers as they approached the area. That was the inspiration for my writing this devotional anthem. In it, you will hear slight references to Jewish turns of melody as well as a constant shifting between major and minor. In 2008, The National Christian Choir and I had the privilege of making our second pilgrimage to Israel. Naturally, they sang this again. As they did, I enjoyed private moments of true worship with gratitude to God for His divine inspiration.

I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked – Visiting the Holy Land and leading a number of pilgrimages there has been one of the top five events of my life. When I was a youth, this song was a beloved solo sung many times in my little Presbyterian Church. I wanted to give it an updated treatment for choirs. The publisher of the original version first gave me permission to make this arrangement and for us to record it. After they heard it, they gave me the wonderful compliment of offering me payment in exchange for their publishing my choral version. I was both proud and humbled. There are many moments within the music and text that are powerfully moving for me personally, but most would agree that the recurring passage, “I climbed the hill of Calvary,” outshines all the others.

In the Name of the Lord – Sandi Patti made this song famous years ago. The chorus has, in my opinion, become a “classic” in our own time among worshipers of many styles and traditions.

O Magnify the Lord – Another Sandi Patti classic, this song is the title song on this CD ***Magnify the Lord***. It's truly uplifting, strong, and almost makes a worshiper want to dance for joy. Listen for a reference to Handel's "Hallelujah" from MESSIAH just before the end.

Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven – A great hymn, a great choral arrangement, and a great accompaniment combine for a great creative achievement. We've used this in a number of concerts over the years, and we never grow tired of it.

There Is a Redeemer - This is another worship song in an anthem setting. I think this anthem epitomizes a style of singing that is one of the hallmarks of The National Christian Choir – singing not only with the voice and the mind, but singing with the Spirit as well.

Thou Art Worthy – From its mellow beginning to its overwhelmingly triumphant ending, this anthem evokes a scene of our being gathered around His throne in Heaven, worshiping Him for eternity. In concerts, it was all that many of us could do to get to the conclusion without tears of love and appreciation to our Savior.

The Tree – The crucifixion has inspired countless musical expressions. This, I believe, is one of the most unique. I doubt you will hear it sung in many churches: It's almost too dramatic for that. When it concludes, one dare not speak until the moment fades and allows us to move on.

You Shall Receive Power – Dr. R.C. Sproul is a great Christian author and teacher. He and I served on the same church staff together when we were just beginning our ministries. One day, he told me he would soon be preaching on one the greatest, yet often neglected subjects in the Scriptures – the Ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of God. He asked me if I had some musical selection to support his sermon. I didn't. So I retired to my office and wrote this anthem in time for my choir to begin rehearsing it that week and use it a month or so later. It so inspired R.C. Sproul, that I dedicated it to him. That was more than 30 years ago. To this day, whenever R.C. and I see one another, he starts singing its melody to me at full voice with an inhibition that makes me laugh and rejoice simultaneously.