



***The Birth of Christ* presented in Rome to standing room only audience. Rising vocal stars join noted Hollywood heavyweights to perform composer Andrew T. Miller's cantata.**

Seattle, WA, April 24, 2009

On Easter Sunday in Rome, Italy, with prominent Vatican representatives in attendance, Academy Award winner Louis Gossett, Jr., Emmy Award winner Michael York and noted screen star James Caviezel narrated composer Andrew T. Miller's *The Birth of Christ*, presented as the crowning performance in the Festival di Pasqua in the Basilica di Santa Maria in Ara Coeli. Soloists Elin Manahan Thomas, Vivica Genaux, Robert McPherson, Christian Sebek, John B. Cooper and Douglas Webster, joined by a choir over 125 voices strong from the United States, stood before a standing room only audience estimated at over 3000 people.

With this performance, *The Birth of Christ* is the first work by an American Composer to be recorded for television in a Vatican Basilica. The recording is currently in post production and does not as yet have a release date.

Initially scheduled for a January 6th performance, the date was changed allowing this work to be the climax of the Easter week music festival produced by Enrico Castiglione, President of Festival di Pasqua.

Stunning Welsh soprano Elin Manahan Thomas, in the role of Mary, sang beautifully. Ms. Thomas showed warmth and innocence, moving many in the audience to tears. Internationally acclaimed mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux brought a regal air to the stage with her compelling performance as Elizabeth, opposite the rich timbre of the voice of Douglas Webster as Zechariahs. Baritone John B. Cooper portrayed a tormented and emotional Joseph, debuting a new piece to the cantata never before performed for an audience: *Joseph's Pledge*. Tenor Christian Sebek rounded out the opening trio as the Shepherd with Joseph (Cooper) and the Angel, Gabriel, sung by tenor Robert McPherson. Mr. McPherson's depiction of Gabriel was riveting and profound, exposing nuances of three different aspects of the Angel's character as he interacts first with Zechariahs, then Mary, followed by Joseph.

The 6.3 magnitude earthquake in L'Aquila on the Monday prior to Easter led Pope Benedict XVI to later declare a mourning period during which time he would not attend public performances or appear other than in ceremonial services.

Of note in the audience were Vatican representatives Archbishop Raymond Leo Burke, appointed Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, and Father Daniel Gallagher, the English Secretariat of State in Rome. Mayor Gianni Alemanno and Vice-Mayor Mauro Cutrufo of Rome attended as well and greeted the audience prior to the opening.

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