The Schola Cantorum of the Pacific singers and musicians performed a choral concert entitled, “From Gregorian to Gospel” at historic St. Mary of the Seven Sorrows in Nashville, Tennessee, Saturday, Aug. 19, 2023. The evening concert followed the Schola singing the parish’s Saturday Vigil Mass and was conducted by Choirmaster Vicente Bastidas-Elizondo, assisted by Choir Founder Marianist Fr. Ted Ley, SM, DMA.

The concert began in the vestibule of the church as the choir and instrumentalists sang the *Oxyrhinchos Papyrus*, the oldest-known Christian melody, that included the final verse and *Amen* of a Biblical Greek hymn with ancient notation. This rarely performed 3rd century pre-Gregorian chant was discovered in 1917 along the Nile River in Egypt.

As an entrance procession, the choir sang the 8th century Latin Gregorian Easter Sequence *Victimae Paschali Laudes*, when Mary Magdalene tells the Apostles Christ has risen. Benjamin Britten's *A Hymn to the Virgin*, in English and Latin, opened the formal concert from the Sanctuary. As Bro. Gary Morris, SM, introduced the program, the choir softly sang *Vexilla Regis*, a Gregorian vesper hymn of Passiontide translated from Latin to English as “The Royal Banners Forward Go.”

The Schola then honored the City of Nashville by singing the Appalachian Gospel hymn *Promised Land*, first published in Nashville in the 1840s. Cellist Russell Bartoli performed an obligato of his own composition to this Dorian Mode (D Minor) classic, which the Schola sang in its original published arrangement.

The Gregorian *Kyrie IX* (*Cum Iubilo*), was then sung, followed by Josquin des Prez's *Kyrie de Beata Virgine* based upon it – an example of polyphonic voicing in Roman Renaissance style.

By the 10th century, the Gregorian choral art named after Pope Gregory the Great had pieces equally as sophisticated as symphonies. *Christus Factus Est* (Christ's Name Above All Other Names) is an example of this melismatic Latin chant.

The Caecilian Movement revived parish use of Gregorian Chant in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Christmas vesper hymn, *Jesu Redemptor Omnium*, by Oreste Ravanello was sung in Latin and English as an example of Caecilian parish music still usable today.

The 20th century Laudate Dominum of the Ecumenical Monastery of Taizé, France, was presented as a contemporary example of great parish and collegiate Liturgical Music, followed by a reprise of the Gregorian *Sanctus de Angelis* from the Vigil Mass, and Fr. Ley’s *Postcommunion Doxology* to round out examples of contemporary true-to-tradition Liturgical Music.

Additional musicians included flutist and clarinetist Brian Clements and keyboard continuo player, Fr. Ley.

Choristers for the concert and Mass included sopranos Christian van Ingen, Marilu Reyes, Cynthia Bih and Louinn Lota. Altos Alisa Benitez and Gennesis Tadeo were joined by tenors, Messrs. Bastidas, Bartoli, and Abraham Tadeo. Recently professed Augustinian Bro. David Marshall, OSA, joined Fr. Ley for the bass section.

The Mass continuity included: *God So Loved the World*, by John Goss as the invitatory and *For the Beauty of the Earth*, by Folliott S. Pierpoint as the introit. A *Spring Kyrie*, arranged by Fr. Ted was the only non-Latin piece of the Common of the Mass, as the Gregorian *Gloria de Angelis, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, Mysterium Fidei* and *Amen* all were chanted by priest and choir.

The music at the Preparation of the Gifts, *To this Table, Lord We Come*, was written by national award-winning Marianist Bro. Howard Hughes. During Communion, *Gift of Finest Wheat,* by Omer Westendorf, was sung by congregation and Schola. The Mass ended with *How Great Thou Art* by Carl Boberg, in an *a cappella* arrangement by Fr. Ley.

The Schola would like to thank St. Mary of the Seven Sorrows pastor, Fr. Jayd Neely, choirmaster-organist Ethan O’Nan, and the staff and parishioners for their generous hospitality, and we thank the concert audience and parish congregation for their appreciative reactions to our performance and cantoral efforts.

The Schola concluded the concert with the African American gospel song, *Every Time I Feel the Spirit*, arranged by Fr. Ley, as our Schola’s tribute to what the Second Vatican Council called "…the particular genius of a people." As an encore, the celebrated *Panis Angelicus* of César Franck, was sung by lyric tenor Vince Bastidas, with Schola chorus and instrumentalists, to conclude our musical offering to our first-ever Nashville audience.