

The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass

Program Note from the Composer

The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass – To bring the solemnity of the classical choir-based mass together with the down home sparkle of bluegrass—now there’s an assignment. My highest hope is that listeners coming from one tradition— classical or bluegrass—and perhaps dubious about the other, might discover something new and wonderful in the combination, as I have. Composing the music for The World Beloved has given me the chance to write cheery sacred music— all too rare in a medium rife with staid and even lugubrious settings. And it’s brought me back to memories of music heard while visiting my grandparents, country music with a church flavor that told stories and came out of a scratchy old record player. Grandma would not have allowed dancing, but under the table I tapped my toes.

Program Note from the Librettist

If you Google the term *Bluegrass Mass*, you’ll get Websites for several churches across the country who add Bluegrass music to enliven their worship services. Great Bluegrass music is infectious and lively, so it’s easy to see why any church would want to add Bluegrass, but why call it a Bluegrass Mass unless there’s liturgy, too—a text in the Bluegrass tradition? Bluegrass is more than a sound. The lyrics of so many Bluegrass songs display an unpretentious, earthy philosophy that is easy to sing and easy to understand: Adam lives just up the street and Eve’s the girl next door. Love is the major theme—frustrated yearning love, secret, satisfied love or boldly proclaimed love. And although romantic love between two people is huge in Bluegrass, so is love of God, the Gospel tradition. *In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us*, says John in the Gospel, which launches our Bluegrass Mass as an earthy, immediate story of love between Creator and creation.

REDUCED PROGRAM NOTE The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass combines the sacred classical choral tradition with the sparkling down home sound of banjo, mandolin and fiddle.