

Music Notes for January 7, 2024

Today is the first Sunday after the Feast of the Epiphany, on which we celebrate the baptism of Jesus.

The service music during the Epiphany season includes the Presentation Hymn, each week a different stanza of the hymn "Christ, be our light" (listen [here](#)), the Sanctus by Joel Martinson (listen [here](#)), and the Fraction Anthem (composed by your Associate for Music [me], listen [here](#)).

The Psalms during Epiphany will be sung using the Hymntune Psalter. Each week the Psalm Antiphon is set to a tune of a different familiar hymn and the choir sings the verses from the St. Helena Psalter to a coordinating psalm tone. The Antiphon for the first Sunday after Epiphany is set to the tune "Deus tuorum militum," which we usually sing to the text of "O love, how deep, how broad, how high."

The prelude and postlude this week feature compositions of Florence B. Price (1887-1953), the first African-American woman organist and composer to receive national recognition and acclaim. Price was born in Little Rock, AR, but moved to Chicago in 1926 where she taught and composed. She was a Presbyterian but was an active church musician and performer, and as a member of the Chicago Club of Women Organists often played at Grace Episcopal Church – Chicago, which was then located at 1450 S. Indiana Avenue. Grace served as the chapel of St. Luke's Hospital, now Rush University Medical Center.

The prelude, "In quiet mood," has lyrical melodies and pleasant harmonies inspired by popular music of the early 20th century. (Price was an accomplished theater organist who often accompanied silent movies and radio programs). The postlude, "Festal March," is equally accessible, based on an English model of processional music (in the form ABCAB) in which various sections can be repeated or omitted to make the piece longer or shorter as needed. This is same musical format as pieces such as Henry Purcell's famous "Trumpet Tune," although the effect is somewhat different due to the use of characteristically African-American and jazz harmonies.

Today's anthem is a setting of the traditional Gospel baptism hymn, "Down to the River," which was most recently popularized by the movie from 2000, "O Brother, Where Art Thou." This arrangement was completed in 2010 by the Assistant Organist at St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church in Louisville, KY, Robert E. Lee.