

April 2002

**ANDREW DAVIS LEADS PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA IN NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE OF MACMILLAN'S QUICKENING**

Thursday, April 18 marks the American debut of *Quickening*, one of **James MacMillan's** most significant concert works. Andrew Davis conducts the Hilliard Ensemble, the Philadelphia Singers Chorale, the American Boychoir, and the Philadelphia Orchestra in three performances at Philadelphia's new Verizon Hall (April 18-20). A pre-concert talk with the composer precedes each performance at 7 pm.

monumental, yet  
intimate

*Quickening* (1999) was jointly commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra and the British Broadcasting Corporation. Lasting some 48 minutes, the four-movement work is scored for four vocal soloists (countertenor, two tenors and baritone), children's choir, mixed choir, and orchestra; the texts are by British poet Michael Symmons-Roberts. In this context, 'quickening' refers to the stage of pregnancy in which the fetus can first be felt to move.

the first stirrings of life

Writes Ronald Weitzman in the program notes for the world premiere, "Secular and sacred commingle in *Quickening*; reverence for life is at its root....The first [movement], "Incarnadine," emphasizes the risk of bringing "another pair of hands into the world"....The central sections, "Midwife" and "Poppies," sniff out, and face, dangers along their journey, dangers such as stillbirth, miscarriage.... Only just before the end of "Living Water," where a pulsating hum has been born out of the silence of the pitches set by the percussion, is there permitted a sustained celebratory outburst, before the music returns to the hiddenness of the work's dream-like opening, in a violin solo accompanied by the uncanny sound of stroked temple bowls and steel drum."

prelude to a  
*Quickening*

On Saturday, April 13 at 8:30 pm, MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross* will be performed by the Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia at St. Patrick's Church (20th and Locust). This profound and moving piece for mixed chorus and strings will be conducted by the group's artistic director, Donald Nally. The next morning (April 14 at 11 am), a Choral Mass will be celebrated at St. Mark's Church, 1625 Locust St, where MacMillan's *Galloway Mass* and *Christus vincit* will be heard.

worth noting

The Scottish-born MacMillan has become a truly international figure: the year 2001 brought performances of his music in no fewer than 23 countries.