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# George Atwell

## COMPOSER



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# BIOGRAPHY

After spending over 20 years in the recording industry as writer/arranger, producer, and keyboard artist, working with Atlantic Records, Star Song Records, Michael Jackson, Petra, Greg X. Volz, Walt Disney World, The New Mickey Mouse Club, and many others, George Atwell currently serves as Composer-in-Residence/Organist with First Presbyterian Church of Orlando, Florida. After joining the staff in 1994 he has served in various capacities as arranger, Associate Director of Music and Arts, and conductor of the FPCO Chamber Orchestra. In January, 2000 he conducted the world premier of his composition “Mass for a New Millennium,” a work unique for its innovative blend of traditional Mass elements with references to science, technology, and the future.

Graduating with a Bachelor of Music performance degree from University of Central Florida, Mr. Atwell studied piano with Iris Engel, Jacques Abram (USF, Tampa), Dr. Gary Wolf, (UCF, Orlando), as well as master classes with famed Polish concert pianist Mieczyslaw Horzowski. Composition studies were with Burt Szabo (UCF). He received organ instruction at Stetson University under professors Harvey Burgett, Dr. Susan Klotzbach, and Dr. Boyd Jones.

Since 1996 he has been accompanist for the Keynote Arts “Children in Harmony” Festival, under the direction of Dr. Barbara Tagg of Syracuse University and has worked with composers David Brunner, Paul Caldwell, Sean Ivory, Bob Chilcott, Z. Randall Stroepe, and others. He has performed as pianist/composer in the US, Vienna, Nairobi, and Prague. In April 2007 “Mass for a New Millennium received its New York premier at Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Atwell’s music has been performed literally around the globe and his composition “Bread for a Hungry World” (a commission from Van Ness/Genevox Music Group) received a special composition award from ASCAP. His music is published by Mijen Press and his many film and commercial compositions are distributed worldwide by Parry Music, Canada. He is cited in the 2008 edition of Who’s Who in America and resides in Orlando, Florida.

## Critical Acclaim

George Atwell's *Mass* marks the arrival of a fresh voice on the American landscape, one that is inventive, facile, intuitive and lyrical. This work, like George himself, is a total delight.

*Paul Caldwell, Composer*

George Atwell's settings of *O Tannenbaum* and *Emmanuel* are striking in their beauty, charm and 'surpriseability'. When one sets two very familiar Christmas tunes, there are many that fall by the wayside to my ears because they either do not honor the tune itself, or the arrangement does not enrich the essence of the tune through their own voice. Neither is the case here -- simply stunning.

*Richard Bjella, Director of Choral Studies, Lawrence University*

I have been acquainted with Mr. Atwell's compositional work for several years now, and continue to be amazed at his acute understanding of the compositional craft. His *Mass for a New Millennium*, for example, is an impressive work which demonstrates a "global" understanding of every aspect of composition. He also brings to the fore a wealth of conducting experience, which is an asset to any serious composer.

*Z, Randall Stroope, Director of Choral Studies, Rowan University*

"I had the opportunity to conduct a couple of movements from "*Mass for a New Millennium*" with The Orlando Chorale and truly enjoyed the music. The singers and audience were moved by the beautiful text and emotional musical setting."

*Gregory Ruffer, Music Director/Founder, The Orlando Chorale*

George Atwell is a composer who has embraced both large and small-scale works. He has a unique compositional voice, persuasive, and with fiery conviction. Advocate of new music but not limited to this century, his music is joyous, optimistic at heart and sophisticatedly crafted.

*Alvaro Gomez, Foundation, Prague, Czech Republic*

I have had a pleasure to perform and listen to composer's George Atwell's rich and wide body of works. He is a great composer, with a clear and unique compositional voice. His music can be deeply spiritual or philosophical, with interesting rhythmic patterns.

*Routa Kroumovitch, Professor Stetson University*

# Compositions

## Choral/Vocal

*Mass for a New Millennium* (SATB, Soprano and Tenor Soloists/Orchestra)

All things new

Kyrie

What is Man?

Gloria

What is Machine?

Conditor Alme Siderum

Fuga Internetus

Agnus Dei

Credo

Dies Irae

Dona Nobis Pacem

*Each new morn* - Text adapted from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (Chorus and Orchestra, or Piano reduction)

*Fly!* (Christmas anthem, SATB/Orchestra)

*Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?* (SATB/Orchestra)

*God is Movin'* original text (SATB, a capella)

*O Tannenbaum* (Christmas, SATB and Orchestra)

*There is a Land of Pure Delight* -Text by Isaac Watts (SATB, a capella)

*Palm Sunday* (Anthem for SATB/Brass and Piano)

*Rejoice, a Child is Born* (Christmas anthem, SATB and Orchestra)

*Emmanuel, God is With Us* (Christmas anthem, SATB and Orchestra)

*Daniel 2* (SATB/Orchestra)

## **Treble choir**

*A Nut for a Jar of Tuna* (Five palindromes for trebles)

**A nut for a jar of tuna**

**Poor Dan**

**Lived on decaf**

**Oh wonder!**

**Rats live on no evil star**

*Fly!* (Christmas anthem SS/AA and Orchestra)

*Light this candle in your heart* (Soprano solo, SS/AA and Orchestra)

*O Tannenbaum* (Christmas, SS/AA and Orchestra)

## **Vocal Solo**

*Emily* (three poems by Emily Dickinson for Soprano or Tenor/piano)

**My life had stood a Loaded gun**

**The bustle in a house**

**There came a wind**

*Fix Me Jesus* (spiritual, Soprano Solo/Orchestra)

*In the Bleak Midwinter* (Baritone Solo and Orchestra)

*Brethren We have met to Worship* (Baritone Solo and Orchestra)

## **Other**

*Flair!* for Brass and Percussion

*Flair!* for Orchestra

# “Mass for a New Millennium”

This astonishing work was written in 1999 anticipating the arrival of the new millennium in 2000. Combining elements of the traditional Mass setting with references to science, technology, and the future, “Mass for a New Millennium” shines a fresh emotional light on the impact of technological invention in our time and raises thought provoking questions about life, science, and ethics within the context of tradition.

This unique, innovative synthesis of old/new has produced a composition of great power, beauty, and expressive impact. Scored for Orchestra, Chorus, Soprano and Tenor Soloists, “Mass for a New Millennium” can be performed in concert format, ballet, fully or semi-staged, and of course, video. The result is a work that moves, excites, provokes, and stimulates audiences and performers alike in a way very few pieces have been able to do. Those who have experienced the “Mass” have described it as “amazing,” “inspiring,” “thrilling,” “a spiritual and emotional mountain top.”

A perfect vehicle for Symphony Orchestras and Choruses, University groups, Church choirs, opera and ballet companies “Mass for a New Millennium” features:

- 1) **All Things New** - The Mass begins simply with solo piano utilizing intervals that simultaneously “stretch” up or down from a central point. This is a musical analog of the Roman god Janus who faces both back to the past and ahead to the future. The Tenor Solo and Chorus sing various scientific/technological terms that are encountered in everyday life and to the “transforming and creative spirit that makes all things new.”
- 2) **Kyrie** - Chorus a cappella, 5/8 meter
- 3) **What is Man?** - A short quote from Psalm 8 serves as a backdrop for the blending of faith and science as man contemplates the breathtaking power and mystery as expressed in the DNA code. For Tenor Solo and Chorus (whose opening lines are the Latin binomial classifications of plants and animals.
- 4) **Gloria** - The chorus expresses a new interpretation of this venerable song of praise.
- 5) **What is Machine?** - Examines the role of machines in our life today and in the future. Currently, we are ill equipped to answer the myriad ethical, moral and legal questions that will be asked as machines become increasingly pervasive and unimaginably powerful in the new millennium. Tenor and Soprano soloists speak as one unit.
- 6) **Conditor Alme Siderum** - An ancient hymn text of respect to the “Composer of the Stars.”
- 7) **Fuga Internetus** - This spirited look at the “world wide web” as viewed through the

prism of the child-like creativity and playfulness of God. The Internet is imagined as a vast playground much like the universe might appear to the Creator.

- 8) **Agnus Dei** - This staple of the Mass throughout history is tenderly presented by Chorus and Orchestra.
- 9) **Credo** - The Soprano Soloist begins the “I believe....” section of the Mass, intertwined with the fixing of our eyes upon the coming of the age, and a plea to “throw open the heart of man” and bring about an “ageless kingdom of love....today!”
- 10) **Dies Irae** - This “day of anger” is viewed as one in which man and his actions are seen as the cause of most of the misery, cruelty, and damage in this time and throughout the ages.
- 11) **Dona Nobis Pacem** - In light of the tremendous possibility for destruction and evil that man is capable of, we still have hope in the power of peace. The same musical motif that began the Mass reappears as one age closes, opening up to another.

For more audio and score samples of “Mass for a New Millennium” and other works of George Atwell, please visit: <http://mijenpress.com/>



