



## Mater Ecclesiae Inspires Dr. Harold Boatrite's Sacred Music

*"Mere words do not suffice when man praises God."*

*-- Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger  
November 17, 1985*

Visitors to Mater Ecclesiae's website have heard the beautiful Ave Maria composed in 2003 by Mater Ecclesiae parishioner, Dr. Harold Boatrite. Others have heard the work performed during the parish's annual Mass of the Assumption in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Camden, together with works of other celebrated masters.

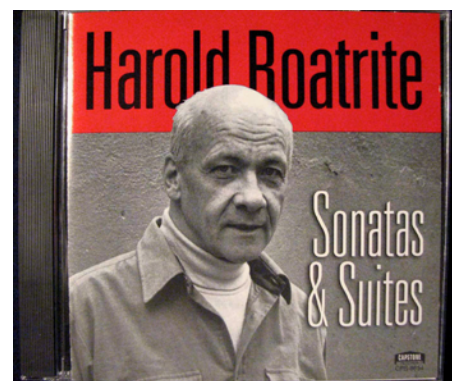
Dr. Boatrite was received into the Church in 1956 and returned years later to the traditional Mass, when, with the permission of Bishop McHugh, it returned to the Cathedral in Camden. Like many venerable composers before him, Dr. Boatrite draws musical inspiration from this Mass, now called the Extraordinary Form. "I was struck by the traditional Mass," he said recently, "because it reminded me of my childhood as an Episcopalian"; and "I continue to be very interested in the revival of the Latin Mass." Earlier, as a young child, when he visited a Catholic church, he had an unexpected religious experience. "I knew there was something special about it."

Today, his career as college professor behind him, Dr. Boatrite continues to teach privately, and more importantly, to compose. His music has been performed throughout the United States and in Europe, including at the annual Prague Autumn International Music Festival, which features orchestras and famous musicians from around the world, and is eagerly anticipated throughout Europe. A selection of his chamber music from the period 1955-65 is recorded on the Capstone label (Harold Boatrite: Sonatas & Suites CPS-8654), and is readily available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and other outlets for classical recordings. Dr. Boatrite's orchestral scores are located in the Edwin A. Fleisher Orchestral Collection, Free Public Library of Philadelphia, known as "the world's largest lending library of orchestral performance material."

Dr. Boatrite has inspired countless students of music, both by his compositions and by his teaching. One of those students is Dr. Timothy McDonnell, who is former music director at Mater Ecclesiae, and who continues to serve as music director for the Assumption Mass. Asked to appraise the performances of his composition and those of other composers by his former student, Dr. Boatrite

characterized them as "Absolutely first rate."

Scholars and music reviewers have heaped high praise on Dr. Boatrite's work. For example, Sid Grolnic, writing in the September 1998 issue of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Music, says "Boatrite's music is notable for the integrity of its



craftsmanship and the power of its drive to communicate. He does not waste the listener's time. He has an extremely strong sense of dramatic structure and an intuitive mastery of form and feeling." And John Davison writes in the liner notes to the chamber music recording, that Dr. Boatrite's music is "noble, strong, and deeply expressive," and "represents a logical, evolutionary step in Western music, using traditional forms in fresh and inventive ways . . . ."

Fr. Pasley has revealed that Dr. Boatrite is his "music coach," and considers it "an honor to have an

internationally known composer as a member of our parish.” Father is also grateful to Dr. Boatrite for volunteering to serve as master of ceremonies and trainer of altar boys in 2000, when the parish was in transition and temporarily



**Dr. Timothy McDonnell conducts at the Assumption Mass.**

located at Holy Maternity Church in Audubon. “Without him we would not have been able to get going. I always thank him for that.”

Dr. Boatrite’s most recent compositions have been Latin motets, of which the Ave Maria is one example. A former student of Latin, he has recently been setting sacred texts with next year’s Assumption Mass in mind. When asked if this type of work is now returning to the contemporary musical world, Dr. Boatrite said that to his knowledge, with the exception of Dr. Timothy McDonnell, who has composed a beautiful Latin Mass, no other composers are doing it. “We are very much in the vanguard at Mater Ecclesiae. It is a remarkable situation,” he said.

Pope Benedict XVI, following a concert in Italy on April 24, 2008, on the third anniversary of his pontificate, said, “There is a mysterious and deep kinship between music and hope, between song and eternal life: not for nothing does the Christian tradition portray the Blessed in the act of singing in a choir, in ecstasy and enraptured by the beauty of God. But authentic art, like prayer, is not foreign to everyday reality although it requires us to ‘water’ it and make it germinate if it is to bring forth the fruit of goodness and peace.”

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Dr. Boatrite plans to release a new recording in the near future, consisting of a selection of his choral and orchestral works.

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**More on Dr. Boatrite**  
**Adapted from Wikipedia.com:**

After early studies with Stanley Hollingsworth, Harold Boatrite was awarded a fellowship to the Tanglewood Music Center where he studied composition with Lukas Foss and took part in the orchestration seminars of Aaron Copland. In 1961 he was invited by Rudolph Serkin to be composer-in-residence at the Marlboro Music Festival.

He received an honorary doctorate in 1967 from the Combs College of Music and subsequently was appointed to the faculty of Haverford College, where he taught theory and composition until 1980. During that time (1974 to 1977) he served on the music panel of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. In honor of his fiftieth birthday in 1982, a series of concerts devoted exclusively to his music was presented by the Pennsylvania Alliance for American Music.

Dr. Boatrite has received many commissions including a concerto for piano and orchestra for the National Association of Composers USA, a concerto for harpsichord and strings commissioned by Temple Painter, *Fantasia on a Gregorian Tune for String Orchestra, Harpsichord, Celesta and Boy Choir* commissioned by the Samuel S. Fels Fund, and a ballet, *A Childermas*, for CBS-TV, which premiered on national television in 1969.

In 1992 Dr. Boatrite was appointed composer-in-residence for the Conductors Institute at the University of South Carolina. He served for many years as new music consultant to the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia.