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Special Collections Flyer

J. Fred. Wolle and His Music

John Frederick Wolle (1863-1933) is a well-known figure in late 19th and early 20th century music in Bethlehem, for most people in his role as founder and first director of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, which is celebrating its centenary this season. He came from a long line of Moravian musicians.

But Wolle played a much larger part in the musical life of the area than just that. He was a composer of a considerable amount of music for Moravian worship, and was from 1887 to 1905 the official organist of Lehigh University.

As a part of the centennial celebration, Moravian College will host a conference from October 22 through 25, 1998 on Moravian music, which will have one of its sessions, Saturday the 24th, on the Lehigh campus in Linderman library. The session is titled "Bach in America: J. Fred. Wolle and the Bach Choir." In addition, an ensemble will perform one of the original pieces by Wolle held in Special Collections, an anthem (a Protestant analogue to the Roman Catholic motet) entitled "He Leads Us On." (See over for a view of the opening page.)

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Paula R. Zerkle, director of choral music at Moravian College, will conduct this piece. She had these comments to make about it:

J. Fred. Wolle's anthem, "He Leads Us On" was written in 1888 for chorus, organ, and soprano and bass solos. A version was also completed for chorus and orchestra. The piece is about six minutes long, and for most part, uses straight-forward harmonic progressions, with chromaticism increasing in moments of heightened intensity. The main theme is a bold vocal melody that consists of two stately rising arpeggios. This theme is hinted at in the arpeggiated organ accompaniment in the first few measures and introduced in its entirety in individual choral lines early



J. FRED. WOLLE

in the piece. The melody frequently departs from this theme, as it closely follows the nuance of the meaning of the text. The chorus, after the introduction of the main theme, moves mainly in homophonic texture, leaving much of the melody interest later in the piece to the soprano and bass solos. The anthem exhibits some highly expressive harmonic and melody language typical of the Romantic period and merits more frequent performances.

In addition to these manuscripts, Special Collections also has a complete run of programs from Bach Choir concerts, going back to the first performance of the Mass in B Minor on March 27, 1900, which took place in the Central Moravian Church in Bethlehem.

Special Collections specific holdings of Wolle materials is supplemented by his own set of the Bach-Gesellschaft's complete edition of Bach's works, published in 60 volumes between 1851 and 1899.

The Wolle manuscripts, which include a number of other compositions as well, were originally presented to the Lehigh library in May 1956, during the annual Bach Festival, by Wolle's daughter, Mrs. G. Prescott Baker.

The anthem "He Leads Us On", was performed as part of the sesquicentennial celebration of the Central Moravian Church. This fall's presentation probably marks the first time since 1956 that it has been performed. -P.A.M.

tions Librarian, or Marie Boltz, Special Collections Assistant. Reading room hours are Monday through Friday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment. Telephone: (610) 758-4506; fax (610) 974-6471; e-mail: inspc@lehigh.edu.

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Special Collections is pleased to have an exhibition of some of its books in the permanent gallery of the Lehigh University Art Galleries in the Zoellner Arts Center. The gallery is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday, and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday.
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Special Collections materials are available for research and consultation without prior arrangement. For further information contact Philip A. Metzger, Special Collec-

