

## *A Coffee with Alessio*



### **The music of Michael Joncas and Marty Haugen**

We are all familiar with the hymn *On Eagle's Wings* by Michael Joncas and *We walk by faith* by Marty Haugen. Both these men, along with several other (contemporary) composers, composed music for the post Vatican II church to fulfil a specific need at a particular point in time. Like so many other composers though, I think it is a real shame that we only know a handful of hymns composed by these men. So my column today offers you an opportunity to further explore their music. This came about by the fact that there is a podcast interview available with these two men from the Sunday Nights program on ABC Radio (in Perth that is 720 on the AM dial). Once in a while I'll listen to this program (usually a podcast) if there is something to do with music or if Fr Richard Leonard SJ is being interviewed. He reviews films for the Australian Bishops Conference among other things. When I'm driving I will listen to the news on the ABC, but otherwise I am listening to the latest music usually from the Top 40 of the week.

I have included the web address of both podcasts for you in this column so you can listen to them at some time. The address for the podcast with Michael Joncas is:

<http://www.abc.net.au/sundaynights/stories/s3936585.htm>

and the address for the Marty Haugen podcast is:

<http://www.abc.net.au/sundaynights/stories/s4329512.htm>

I found both interviews very interesting and easy to listen to. Both these men are very humble, down to earth people. I haven't met

Michael Joncas, but I met Marty Haugen last year and spent a fair amount of time with him at the APMN conference in Brisbane as well as while he was here in Perth. He is truly a gentleman!

In his interview, Michael Joncas so well encapsulates the meaning of “full, conscious and active participation” by the faithful in the post Vatican II Church. For he explains that some acclamations **belong** to the people, such as the Gospel Acclamation, Holy, and Memorial Acclamation. He also goes on to explain that there are also times in the liturgy where the choir can sing on its own as well. Listening is both a form of prayer and also a form of participation. There is a saying “if you talk, you only say what you know, but if you listen, you will learn something.” The same can be said with our prayer life and participation in the Mass. For when we are listening to the music being sung, we can meditate on the words that are being sung, and use that as a prayer as well. A choir singing a hymn or motet on its own in the liturgy, ought not to be confused with a performance! I think this is something important to think about. So I would suggest at your coffee this week, get a couple of your choir members together and find a couple of pieces that you will be able to sing on your own at liturgies during the year that will also be prayerful for the congregation. Please don't confuse what I am saying with the choir must sing everything on its own. That certainly is not what the post-Vatican II liturgy called for, and **neither** am I! If you are looking for something ‘striking’ of Michael Joncas to sing, go to the GIA Publications website ([giamusic.com](http://giamusic.com)) and listen to a preview and order his compositions. Two of my favourites are as follows: *We shall go rejoicing* and *Come let us sing*. They are two pieces that will be most suitable for a festive occasion!

Marty Haugen too has written so much music and yet so much of his music is sadly unknown. Although I am hoping after his visit to Perth last year and a successful one at that, that people will explore his music more. His latest collection *Here Among Us* contains various songs for the liturgical year including music for this Jubilee Year of Mercy. A very bright piece of music in this new collection is *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* which can simply be sung in unison, or with choir, keyboard and or/ guitar. That is the beauty of the music of Marty and Michael, that it can be done in a variety of ways according to a parish's available resources and the abilities of its musicians. One of my favourite hymns composed by Marty is *Eye Has Not Seen* (As One Voice 1, #146). I like this text, because our work as musicians in

parishes is definitely a labour of love for the Lord, so I am sure He has blessed us abundantly in return for what we do for Him.

Make sure you listen to both these podcasts and explore some other music by these two men. That will give you something to ponder as you have a coffee this week.

Enjoy your coffee!

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Friday April 29 2016