

Hamburg is a *very lucky city*. One of the finest recent additions to its rich musical culture is the spirited mens choral ensemble **Vocallegro**, founded in 1996 and masterfully directed by **Arpad Christian Thuroczy**. Herr Thuroczy's twenty-five member ensemble rehearses and performs regularly throughout the year (sometimes on very short notice), treating its audiences to the vibrant harmonies, lush textures, and moving interpretations they have come to expect from this remarkable group. As even a hasty inspection of their repertoire list reveals, Vocallegro's versatility is downright *incredible*—sacred and secular art music from the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and modern periods, plus folk music, spirituals and a variety of popular selections—have all found a place in the group's performances. And in addition to presenting full ensemble music, Vocallegro frequently features quartets and other smaller 'subset' groups in its concerts, and various members share in the solo work as well.

I first happened upon Vocallegro's internet website (www.vocallegro.de) in February 2003 where, to my surprise, I discovered that the ensemble had recorded fourteen arrangements from my Christmas collection *Sacred Carols* (1996: G. Schirmer, Inc.) on their debut CD, *silent night, holy night!* It is always a privilege when one's music is studied, performed and recorded by fine musicians, but to have so much of it represented on a single CD and to hear it so sensitively interpreted makes this 'collaboration' with Vocallegro a special honor for me. Besides my carols and Herr Thuroczy's wonderful arrangement of Vocallegro's signature piece, "Let the Light Lead Me and You," *silent night, holy night!* also features five Christmas stories—given delightfully expressive readings by Frank Fingerhuth—mixed in among the music tracks, making this recording a particular gem for its German-speaking audience.

Beyond their sheer musicality, perhaps what most distinguishes Vocallegro in my own mind—and something that is always evident when I listen to them sing—is their obvious *love* of what they do. One really cannot hear a Vocallegro performance without feeling individually touched, cheered, refreshed, and bettered by it, and I think this uplifting effect must emanate from the group's fundamental love of music-making and from the fraternal communion they so clearly share as musicians. Indeed, the group's 'soul' and 'mission,' if one were to think in such terms, might well be summarized by the compassionate spirituality embodied in the lyrics of "Let the Light Lead Me and You":

Let our song invade the silence,
Finding hope and freedom and light in the dark;
And after fights and words of violence
Let us pray to the Gracious, our Father, our God!

Times of joy and times of sorrow—
Yes! His light will lead us through.
Oh, do not care what comes tomorrow;
We can face it together—between me and you.

So, to the men of Vocallegro, together with my heartfelt thanks, I extend my salutations and ongoing best wishes. And to the people of Hamburg I repeat: You are indeed a *very lucky city*.



Mishawaka, Indiana, USA
27 August 2003

Biographical Note: **Donald Campfield** (born 1956) is an award-winning composer of popular songs, jazz, and art music, an arranger, and a church musician. He holds B.Mus.Ed. and M.M. degrees from Ithaca College's School of Music (Ithaca, NY) and the D.M.A. in music composition from Cornell University, where his teachers included composers Karel Husa, Steven Stucky and Robert Palmer, vocal conductor Thomas Sokol, and musicologist William Austin. In addition to his writing activities Dr. Campfield has taught music theory at Ithaca College, and music theory, church music ministry and piano at Bethel College (Mishawaka, IN). His most recently completed work, a collection of 120 hymn tune settings for Organ titled *Hymns of Majesty and Contemplation*, is being published by Fred Bock Music Company in volumes of ten pieces each (Vol. 1 was issued in 2002).