Noye’s Fludde
The Chester Miracle Play, set to music by Benjamin Britten

Saturday, November 14, 2009, 7:30 pm
Sunday, November 15, 2009, 10:00 am and 4:00 pm

The First Congregational Church of Greenwich
Old Greenwich, Connecticut
**Noye’s Fludde ≈≈ The Story**

While going about his daily work, Noah (Noye) suddenly hears the voice of God warning him of impending destruction and commanding him to build a ship in which he and his family can escape the deluge.

Noah summons his sons – Sem, Ham and Jaffett – and their wives, and all begin to collect the necessary tools and materials. Mrs. Noah and her “gossips” sit together drinking and contributing contemptuous remarks. Despairing of obtaining his wife’s help, Noah tells her to be quiet for fear that others will think she is master of the family, which he secretly admits she is.

Noah’s sons and their wives begin to build the Ark under Noah’s supervision. When it is finished he urges his wife to jump into the boat, but she refuses. The voice of God is heard again, commanding Noah to enter the Ark with his family and to take with him each kind of beast and fowl – he and shee, mate to mate – for it is my likinge mankinde for to annoye. God tells Noah that it will rain for forty days and forty nights, and that everything will be destroyed except the Ark. As Noah urges haste the animals arrive and enter the ark two-by-two, singing KYRIE ELEISON! -- LORD, HAVE MERCY!

Everyone but Mrs. Noah is bundled into the Ark, and Sem, Ham and Jaffett succeed in hauling her aboard just before the water sweeps the screaming gossips away. As Noah feels the boat begin to move, he and his family close up the Ark and praise God for their deliverance. The wind grows stronger and waves rock the ship more and more violently. The animals begin to panic, and above the fury of the storm everyone sings ETERNAL FATHER, STRONG TO SAVE -- and slowly the storm abates.

After forty days and nights, when the rain has almost stopped, Noah sends a raven to search for dry land. The raven does not return, and Noah concludes that dry land is near. Then he sends a dove, and the little bird flies back with an olive branch. Noah gives thanks to God, who commands him to leave the Ark and to take his family and all the animals with him.

The animals sing a great chorus of ALLELUIA as they disembark. God promises that there will be no more floods and sends a rainbow as token of that promise. The brilliant colors of the rainbow are followed by the celestial bodies moving across the sky. Everyone sings of THE SPACIOUS FIRMAMENT ON HIGH, each leaving the Ark to begin life anew. Only Noah remains for a moment, and he hears God’s quiet blessing – and now fare well, my darlings deare.

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“I certainly write music for human beings, directly and deliberately. I consider their voices, the range, the power, the subtlety, and the colour potentialities of them. I consider the instruments they play, their most expressive and suitable individual sonorities, and where I may be said to have invented an instrument (such as the Slung Mugs of “Noye’s Fludde”), I have borne in mind the pleasure the young performers will have in playing it.

“Music demands more from a listener than simply the possession of a tape-machine or a transistor radio. It demands some preparation, some effort, a journey to a special place, saving up for a ticket, some homework on the programme perhaps, some clarification of the ears and sharpening of the instincts. Music demands as much effort on the listener’s part as the other two corners of the triangle, this holy triangle of composer, performer, and listener.”

*Benjamin Britten*

**THIS PRODUCTION USES STROBE LIGHTS DURING THE STORM.**
HYMNS SUNG BY THE CONGREGATION

After the Overture, the Congregation, remaining seated, sings:

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm doth bind the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to thee
For those in peril on the sea.

The Congregation joins the Cast in singing:

O Sav - iour, whose al - might - y word the winds and waves sub - mis - sive heard, Who
walk - edst on the foam - ing deep, and calm a - midst its rage didst sleep, O
hear us when we cry to thee, For those in per - il on the sea.
After the Rainbow unfolds across the sky, the Cast alone sings four stanzas of The Spacious Firmament:

1. The spacious firmament on high, 3. Soon as the evening shades prevail
   With all the blue ethereal sky, The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
   And spangled heavens, a shining frame, And nightly to the listening earth
   Their great Original proclaim. Repeats the story of her birth.

2. The unwearied sun from day to day 4. Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
   Doth his Creator’s power display, And all the planets in their turn
   And publishes to every land Confirm the tidings as they roll,
   The works of an almighty hand. And spread the truth from pole to pole.

The Congregation, remaining seated, joins the Cast in singing:

5. What though in solemn silence all Move round the dark terrestrial ball; What though no real
   voice nor sound Amid their radiant orbs be found.

In reason’s ear they all rejoice, And
   utter forth a glorious voice; For ever singing
   as they shine, “The hand that made us

1. is Divine.” In
2. is Divine.” A - men.
THE CAST

*The Voice of God* Richard Peebles
*Noye* Thomas Woodman
*Mrs. Noye* Holly Sorensen
*Sem* Ivan Golodinskii
*Ham* Daniel Lepoutre
*Jaffett* Charlie Baird
*Mrs. Sem* Jennifer Florence
*Mrs. Ham* Amy Cass
*Mrs. Jaffett* Katie Weatherseed
*The Raven* Henry Wheelock
*The Dove* Olivia Pfetsch

*Mrs. Noye’s Gossips* Hanna Golodinskii
Olga Hartwell
Olivia Hartwell
Pat Larrabee
Anne Low
Andrea Woodman Osker
Carolyn Paulus
Lea Torelli

*Property People* Jeff Aselin
Clem Lepoutre

CHORUS OF ANIMALS

*Elephants* Rick Woodman
Ruth Lubbers
*Giraffes* Mark Mohn
Beth Press
*Moose* Rick Derr
Marilyn Derr
*Tigers* Ed Oppedisano
Betty Bonsal
*Lions* Tad Larrabee
Sherry Myer
*Antelope* David Condon
Sue Baker
*Mayflies* Gillian Woodman
Stephanie Woodman
*Deer* Fred Lorthioir
Christina Schoen
*Foxes* Deb Wheelock
Akintoye Ariyibi

*Butterflies* Ella Quinn
Sarah Morris
*Grasshoppers* Peter Gurciullo
Olivia Gurciullo
*Oxen* Vasil Golodinskii
Betsy Kreuter
*Horses* Jake Schinto
Yevgeniya Golodinskii
*Rabbits* A.J. Pagani
Barbara Pagani
*Mice* Grace Alfano
Malik Armitage
*Ferrets* Max Armstead
Emma Olmsted
*Chipmunks* Alex Arnold
Joshua Arnold
*Squirrels* Jennie Olmsted
Johnny Romano
*Bats* Benjamin Schinto
Kendall Schrohe
*Wolves* Andrea Woodman Osker
Carolyn Paulus
*Ostriches* Fred Laffan
Colleen Alfano
*Toucans* Drew Mohn
Elizabeth Mohn
*Eagles* George Wheelock
Brianna Feighery
*Cardinals* Kieran Mackay
Catherine Ziac
*Flamingos* Paul Kretschmann
Diane Kretschmann
*Curlews* Patrick Condon
Mariel Laffan
*Parrots* William Mackay
Jessie Aselin

STORM DANCERS

Jadesola Ariyibi
Parker Freeman
Caroline Kelly
Sophie Lindh
Julia Quinn
Suzanna Ryckman
Taylor Schinto
THE ORCHESTRA

Solo Strings
- Violin: Edyta Orlynite, Maria Conti
- Viola: Suzanne Corey-Sahlin
- Cello: Gunnar Sahlin
- Bass: Tod Hedrick

Student Strings
- Violins: Kristen Andonie, Megan Tedford, Apolline Vincent
- Viola: Thibault Vincent
- Cello: Godfroy Vincent
- Bass: John O'Shaughnessy

Solo Treble Recorder: Mary Fike

Treble Recorder: Marianne Makman

Descant Recorder
- Hansini Baser
- Vicki Cain
- Janice Riddell
- Julia Wang

Trumpet
- Vincent Lukason
- Constantine Lycouris
- Meaghan Garofalo

Timpani: Peter Hohmeister

Percussion
- Julia Brion
- Kenny Dorian
- John McCormack
- Will McCormack
- Shaw Speer

Piano: Jon Hunt, Terence J. Flanagan

Organ: Mark Swicegood

Handbells
- Deborah Bonnell
- Pat Geismar
- Bob Lubbers
- Barbara Norrgard
- Jean Watkins
- Caralienne Westbrook

THE PRODUCTION STAFF

Musical Direction: John Stansell
Stage Direction and Choreography: Gregory Suss
Set Design: Bill Bonnell
Stage Manager and Costumes: Anne Wachsman
Assistant to Dr. Stansell: Donna Tagliarino
Lighting: Eric Everett
Sound: Bob Small
Horizon Sound, New Haven

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

First Church custodians
Juan Leon and Lilliam Rodriguez
The parents of cast members
All who helped with the hard work of transforming our church into an ark
Dale Myer and the ushers he organized
Costume Crew: Michael Pellegrino
Pat Geismar
Mariann Ekernas
Debbie Berner
Betsy Kreuter
Deborah Bonnell
Mary Helen Morris
Charlene Barnes
Eileen Griffin
Lori Romano
Anne Low
Jean Watkins

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Noye’s Fludde  A Glossary

The Flood is dramatized in all the medieval miracle cycles. The Chester pageant was performed appropriately enough by the Water-Carriers and Drawers of Water from the River Dee. Many words and phrases in the text are unfamiliar to contemporary ears, and we hope this glossary will prove helpful.

READY BOWNE: prepared
Sem: Father, I am all readye bowne

GAITHER SLYCHE: gather plaster
Mrs. Ham: and I will go gaither slyche

TO MAKE A FIER FOR YOU IN FERE: to make a fire for you all

AND FOR TO DIGHITE YOURER DYNNER: to prepare your dinner

LETT BE ALL THIS BEARE: stop all this loud noise
Noah: Good wiffe, let be all this beare

FRYNISHE FARE: polite urgency

DOE AFTER THY REDE: follow your advice
Mrs. Noah: for all thy fynishe fare I will not doe after thy rede

COLLY FOR TO EATE: cabbage to eat
Ham: hares hoppinge gaylie go bringing colly for to eat

WOULFES SETTE: pair of wolves
Mrs. Sem: and here are beares, woulfes sette

EVILL HAILE: bad luck
Mrs. Noah: row forth with evil haile

SEM, SONNE, LOE! THY MOTHER IS WRAWE: Sem, son, lo! Thy mother is angry (Noah)

CHEISTE: boat
Mrs. Noah: but thou lett them into thy cheiste

THAT WORCKES NOT THY WILL IS WOOD: who works not thy will is mad (Noah and children)

BY MY LEWTYE: by my faith
Noah: but yet a dove, a dove, by my lewyte

MEKE AND HEND: meek and obedient
Noah: thou (the dove) art most meke and hend

IN HEIGHT: in haste
Noah’s children: Thy bidding shall be done in height

I BEHETTE THEE A HESTE: I promise you
The Voice of God: Noye, Noye, heare I behette thee a heste

WHERE CLOUDES IN THE WELCKINE BENE: where clouds in the heavenly sphere

THAT ILKE BOWE SHALBE SEENE: that same bow shall then appear

IN TOCKEN THAT MY WRATH AND TEENE: in token that my fierce anger

SHALL NEVER THUS WROCKEN BE: shall no more vengeance take

Noah and his Ark have been in our minds from childhood – the coming together of animals and water and dry land and a rainbow has really been common to all our lives. It is a story that captures our hearts in so many ways – it is adventure and danger, and finally peace and happiness.

Benjamin Britten was born at Lowestoft, Suffolk, England, 22 November 1913. He died at Aldeburgh, Suffolk, 4 December 1976. Britten composed NOYE’S FLUDDE to give children the opportunity to participate with adults in a medieval miracle play with contemporary music. The medieval Chester cycle of plays, from which the libretto of NOYE’S FLUDDE is taken, was performed by ordinary people – local craftsmen and tradesmen and their families, with choristers from the church for the children’s parts. Britten brought this beautiful idea forward to our time, but he retained the early English spelling with its colorful descriptions of birds and animals and all the lively disagreements between Noah and Mrs. Noah.

The congregation becomes involved in the drama through the singing of three hymns. LORD JESUS, THINK ON ME sets the mood at the beginning. During the storm it is the singing of ETERNAL FATHER, STRONG TO SAVE that makes the wind gradually die down and the waters subside over the newly-washed world. In the final moments we behold THE SPACIOUS FIRMAMENT ON HIGH and join to proclaim that the hand that made us is Divine.

The first performance of NOYE’S FLUDDE took place in Orford Church near Aldeburgh, 18 June 1958. Britten composed other parables for church performance, but his concept of NOYE’S FLUDDE stands alone as a magnificent meshing of talents and ages in the great story of Noah and the Ark.

Richard Vogt, 1993
Noye's Fludde 2009 Patrons

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One anonymous contribution

ELEPHANT
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Mariann and Anders Ekernas
Frank and Shona Quinn
One anonymous contribution

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