

Sunday Music Notes – November 19, 2023

Hymn 336 **We Gather Together** **KREMSER**

Often sung in the United States for Thanksgiving services or on the Sunday preceding Thanksgiving, this hymn is Dutch in origin, as is the tune KREMSER. Notice how Theodore Baker's (1851-1934) English translation includes the rhyme within the third line of each stanza (*oppressing/distressing, beginning/winning, congregation/tribulation*).

Hymn 643 **Now Thank We All Our God** **NUN DANKET ALLE GOTT**

Martin Rinkart (1586-1649) was a Reformation-era Lutheran pastor in Eilenburg, Saxony. During the Thirty Years' War, Eilenburg, a walled city, became overcrowded with people seeking a safe haven. Plague soon began to spread among the population in 1637, and Rinkart was soon the only surviving pastor; he performed up to 50 funerals a day as the victims were buried. For the remainder of his life, he contended with famine and financial hardship.

Rinkart's hymn originated as a table grace. The first two stanzas are based on passages from the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus. The third is a doxological stanza, a paraphrase of the Lesser Doxology, commonly known as the Gloria Patri. The tune, a chorale possibly written by Rinkart, is usually attributed to Johann Crüger (1598-1662), the German composer who first published it. The four-part hymnal harmonization was written by a more prominent German composer, Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847).

Postlude **Nun danket alle Gott – Marche Triomphale** **Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877-1933)**

The postlude is an improvisation on the hymn tune by a late Romantic-era German composer. The first two lines of the tune are somewhat buried by the thick chords and heavy registration. This piece is a staple of organ repertoire and is commonly played in the United States around Thanksgiving.