



CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

ORGAN RECITAL

Peter DuBois, Organ

Thursday, February 9, 2023 - 8 p.m.

MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Prelude & Fugue in A minor, BWV 543 J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

Four Spiritual Preludes David Hurd (b. 1950)

Oh! What a Beautiful City
Go Down, Moses
Were You There?
Deep River

Psalm Prelude, Op. 32, No. 1 Herbert Howells (1892 - 1983)

“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” -Psalm 34:6

Choral III in A minor César Franck (1822-1890)

from Studien für den Pedal-Flügel, Op. 56 Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

1. In C major
5. In B minor

Tocatta and Fugue, Op. 59, Nos. 5 & 6 Max Reger (1873-1916)

from Symphonie Gothique, Op. 70 Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)

II. Andante sostenuto

from 24 Pièces de Fantaisie, Op. 54 Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

VI. Carillon de Westminster

Mr. DuBois is represented by Windwerk Artists, www.windwerkartists.com

Program Notes

When studying, playing, or listening to one of the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, it's almost as if we are encountering one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It is, therefore, incumbent on a performer to be something of a tour guide to the riches of this music. Each piece is an exquisite gem, revealing truths about order, structure, and symmetry, while at times playing with those expectations. Each piece also conveys an underlying spirituality, as Bach inscribed each of his works - even those not explicitly religious - with the initials S.D.G - Soli Deo Gloria - To God alone be glory. *The Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 543* is one of those pieces that plays with our expectations - from the Prelude's opening sequence of descending 16th note triads - transitioning back and forth to triplet figurations; to the irregular phrase lengths of the unique fugue subject which, when layered together, provide a seamless, almost hypnotic, musical fabric. This is music, that to me, while it is full of activity, on a macro level exudes a confident serenity.

David Hurd is one of the leading organists, church musicians, and improvisers of our time. He served for many years on the faculty of the General Theological Seminary and currently is Director of Music and Organist at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in New York.

The composer writes:

Four Spiritual Preludes is a suite of short organ pieces roughly comparable in scale and intention to the Orgelbüchlein chorales of J. S. Bach...in “Oh! What a Beautiful City,” the spiritual melody appears above the left hand and pedal accompaniment. The accompaniment patterns feature triplets and other groups of threes representing the four sets of three gates referred to in the text...”Go down, Moses” is constructed over a pedal voice that chromatically descends for more than two octaves. The spiritual melody is in the uppermost voice while two additional accompanying voices dialogue with one another to provide a fluid, if not somewhat tortured, harmonization. Written in 1994 at the suggestion of a colleague, “Were You There” is the first piece composed for this set. It features the unadorned melody in the top voice accompanied by a rocking figure in fourths that suggests an atmosphere of desolation suitable to the spiritual...the prelude on “Deep River” completes the set. Augmented triads and thirds in triplet figures largely support its chorus melody while chords in triplet patterns occur under its verse melody and alto voice. A

reprise of the chorus ends the prelude. - David Hurd

Beloved English composer Herbert Howells synthesized many musical influences into his unique compositional language, always creating an evocative sense of time and space. In 1915 and 1916 he composed the first of two sets of organ pieces inspired by verses from the Psalms. The first, *Psalm Prelude, Op. 32, No. 1*, is inspired a verse from Psalm 34. Beginning quietly, with a somewhat yearning figure, it builds in intensity to full organ, only to recede back to a quiet close. It is the kind of music one might imagine hearing on entering an English cathedral, where the organist is improvising just prior to Evensong.

This past year marked the 200th anniversary of the birth of César Franck, born December 10, 1822. Franck is without question the most influential and significant French organist and composer of music for organ of the 19th century. Greatly influenced by the technological developments and grand, symphonic sound of the instruments designed and built by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, he created an entirely new musical language for the organ. In the process he inspired generations of French organist/composers whose influence continues even to this day. Though few of his works are explicitly religious, as with Bach, there is a deep spirituality that pervades his music. His last compositions were a set of *Three Chorals* - not based on hymn tunes - but of melodies of his own invention that have some of the characteristics of a hymn. The third of these, *Choral in A minor*, harks back to the Bach Prelude that we heard earlier - both in the key of A minor, but also in the keyboard figurations which open the Choral - in patterns of descending harmonies outlined by 16th notes. I don't believe it's coincidental, but is perhaps a direct reference to the Bach work. After the dramatic introduction, we come to the hymn-like main theme which is developed and, after a beautifully lyrical middle section, is ultimately combined with the figuration of the opening to create a dramatic conclusion.

One of the musical curiosities of the 19th century was a little-known instrument called the pedal-piano. The instrument usually consisted of a grand piano, with the addition of a completely independent set of strings in its own case underneath the piano activated by pedals in much the same way as organ pedals. Robert Schumann became quite enraptured by the instrument, and wrote six *Studien*, and six *Skizzen* (Sketches) for the instrument. Because the instruments went out of vogue by late in the

century, organists have adopted and adapted the pieces to the organ. The studies are all in the form of canons, in which one voice imitates the other a measure or so after the first voice sounds. The first, in C Major, is an elegantly flowing canon between the hands over a gently moving pedal line. The B minor canon is more playful by contrast.

The late-Romantic German composer Max Reger was one of the great post-Wagnerian composers, rivaling Richard Strauss in esteem as a composer of the time. The dense counterpoint of his compositions and intense chromaticism have their root in his admiration and reverence for Bach, whom he called “the beginning and end of all music.” The *Toccata and Fugue, Op. 59, Nos. 5 & 6* provide a concise survey of Reger's compositional style. The dramatic Toccata alternates between wispy manual figurations and dramatic, crashing chordal exclamations. A central section provides tranquil relief, before a return to the opening figurations, building momentum to a powerful close. The Fugue begins on some of the softest sounds of the instrument. As each subsequent voice enters on the fugue subject, stops are gradually added, and the tempo increases in parallel, building to a final, triumphal statement of the fugue subject in long notes in the pedal.

The final two pieces on the program illustrate to a great degree the continuation of the compositional legacy left by César Franck. Franck's championing of the symphonic style of organ building, with its rich foundational choruses, and brilliant reeds, has had a lasting impact on French music for the organ to this very day. And his “invention” of the genre of the organ symphony lived on through Charles-Marie Widor and Louis Vierne in their own organ symphonies, of which Widor wrote ten, and Vierne six - monumental works of the organ literature.

The *Andante sostenuto* is the second movement of Charles-Marie Widor's ninth organ symphony, titled *Symphonie gothique*. The movement begins with a long spun-out melody on one of the large-scale flutes of the instrument that sings above an undulating accompaniment. A central section builds to a rich section characterized by the warm foundation stops of the instrument presenting a second melody in the pedal. The piece concludes with a return to the opening flute melody, with the addition of a countermelody in the pedal, bringing the piece to a gentle close.

In addition to composing six organ symphonies, Louis Vierne, who studied briefly with Franck, wrote twenty-four *Pièces de fantaisie* in four sets of six pieces each. The final piece in the third set is the *Carillon*

de Westminster. This is a wonderful interpretation of the famous Westminster chimes – with slight variation - as seen through French eyes. Vierne, who was organist at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, on one of his early concert tours to England, was most impressed by the instruments being built by the leading English organ builder of the time, Henry Willis. When he returned home, he composed this dazzling piece in homage to Mr. Willis, utilizing the theme of the hourly chime of the bells in the tower at Parliament in London.

-Notes by Peter DuBois

Peter DuBois, organist

PETER DuBOIS serves as Director of Music/Organist (full time) at Third Presbyterian Church, Rochester, New York, a position he has held since September, 1991. He oversees a large and active music and arts ministry there. From 2000 to 2014, and again in 2018-2019, he also served as Assistant Professor of Sacred Music (part time) and Director of the Sacred Music Diploma program at the Eastman School of Music. Prior to his appointment at Third Church, he served for ten years as Director of Music/Organist at Christ Church United Methodist in Charleston, West Virginia. He also taught organ at West Virginia Wesleyan College and University of Charleston.

In July 2009, Peter became host of the long-running public radio program, “With Heart and Voice,” a program of sacred choral and organ music, produced by WXXI Public Broadcasting in Rochester, and syndicated nationally to over 125 stations in 36 states. In addition, an archive of each week’s program is available for on-demand listening online at www.withheartandvoice.org.

Critically acclaimed as a “world class talent,” Mr. DuBois is in frequent demand as a recitalist around the United States and abroad. He has performed throughout much of the United States, and in Europe he has performed recitals in recent seasons at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London; the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris (twice); the Basilica of Ste. Clotilde in Paris and the Cathédrale du Saint-Sauveur in Aix-en-Provence. Peter has performed at regional and national conventions of the American Guild of Organists, and most recently at the Organ Historical Society National Convention in 2018. In addition, he has performed at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina; at the Washington National Cathedral; Grace Cathedral, San Francisco; at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.; and in master classes with Arthur Poister, Gillian Weir, Naji Hakim, and Marie-Louise Langlais.

Peter holds the Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York, where he was a student of renowned artist-teacher David Craighead. He received the Master of Music degree in Organ Performance from the University of Michigan, having studied there with Robert Glasgow. Former teachers also include David Mulbury, Clyde English and Marie Boette. He completed a month of study in Paris in January 2002 while on sabbatical, studying improvisation with Philippe Lefebvre, and repertoire with Marie-Claire Alain and Marie-Louise Langlais.

Peter has performed both standard and contemporary organ concertos with

several orchestras, including a performance of the Poulenc Concerto in G minor for Organ, Strings and Timpani with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and a performance of Stephen Paulus' 1992 Concerto for Organ, Timpani, Percussion and Strings with the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra. He has led the Chancel Choir of Third Church on two very successful international tours, beginning with a trip in 2001 that included spending a week as Choir-in-Residence at Rochester Cathedral (Kent, UK), and performing as well at Coventry and Salisbury Cathedrals. They returned to the UK in the summer of 2005 for a week as Choir-in-Residence at London's landmark St. Paul's Cathedral, as well as performing concerts in Ely and Edinburgh, and a private workshop with noted composer Andrew Carter.

Peter made his New York City debut as a collaborative pianist, accompanying baritone Derrick Smith and trumpeter Herbert Smith in recital at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall in December 2006.

Peter is active not only as a recitalist and church musician, but as an organ clinician for various groups. He has been organ clinician for summer conferences of the National Fellowship of American Baptist Musicians in Green Lake, Wisconsin, and of the Northeastern Jurisdiction of the Fellowship of United Methodists in Worship, Music and the Other Arts. He participated as a presenter at the 15th AGO National Conference on Organ Pedagogy: Teaching Church Music in North America, held at Yale University (2009), and recently served as a judge for the final round of the Mu Phi Epsilon International Performance Competition (2011).

Peter has been active in the American Guild of Organists, serving as General Chairman for the 1985 Mid-Atlantic Regional Convention held in Charleston, WV, and is a Past Dean of the Kanawha and Rochester chapters of the AGO. He and his wife live in Rochester, and have two grown children.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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