



Christ Lutheran Church
presents

Dr. John Bernthal, organist

Sunday, September 10, 2023
4:00 p.m.



Celebrating the 5th anniversary of the
Sanctuary Organ

Program

Fuga III in D Minor (Op. 37, No. 3)

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809 – 1847)

Two Chorale Preludes from a Pelz Anthology

Come Down, O Love Divine

Come, Thou Almighty King

Walter Pelz
(1926 -)

Mors et resurrectio (from Trois Paraphrases Gregoriennes)
(Death & Resurrection from Three Gregorian Paraphrases, Op. 5, No. 1)

Jean Langlais
(1907 – 1991)

Tocatta in F Major (BWV 540)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 – 1750)

~ Intermission ~

O Gott, du frommer Gott (BWV 767)
(Diverse variations on 'O God, Thou Faithful God')

J.S. Bach

When Love is Found
(from Improvisations for the Church Year)

Aaron David Miller
(1972 -)

Rubrics; A Liturgical Suite for Organ in Five Movements
IV: The peace may be exchanged
V: The people respond – Amen!

Dan Locklair
(1949 -)

Program Notes

Fuga in D minor

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy is credited with reviving the works and reputation of J.S. Bach, particularly his organ and choral works. Like Bach, Mendelssohn was famous for his virtuosic skills in organ performance and improvisation. His compositions of Opus 37 (*Three Prelude & Fugues*) reveal a thorough understanding of Bach's compositional style. A fugue (*fuga*) is a contrapuntal work featuring several individual melodic lines sounding together, each of which begins with a common melodic fragment call a 'fugue subject'. At the beginning of a fugue, each of the four successive voices begins with the fugue subject. Later entries of the subject may appear in any voice; sections of the piece not containing a fugue subject are called *episodes*, and they provide contrasting material.

One noteworthy feature of this particular fugue subject is that it is divided into two halves – three half notes followed by a longer descending line in quarter notes. This allows Mendelssohn to develop the second half of the fugue subject independently from the first half. He does this in the episodes by using imitation between two voices. This piece is an excellent example of a mature fugal composition which closely follows the model established by J.S. Bach.

Two Choral Preludes

Walter Pelz was a longtime Professor of Music at Bethany College, Lindsborg, KS, where he taught theory, composition, piano, organ, directed choirs, and served as college organist for over fifty years. He received the Faithful Servant Award from the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) for a lifetime of service.

The hymn *Come Down, O Love Divine* (ELW 804) is a hymn whose music was composed by Ralph Vaughan Williams. The freely flowing treble solos of Pelz's setting are reminiscent of Vaughan Williams' orchestral piece *The Lark Ascending*. The hymn tune melody resides mostly in the left hand on a solo stop. This quiet, contemplative setting contrasts greatly with the following piece.

Come, Thou Almighty King (ELW 408) is set as a brilliant toccata with rapid figuration in the manuals and the chorale melody heard prominently in the pedal.

Mors et Resurrectio (Death and Resurrection)

French composer **Jean Langlais** was an internationally known organist, composer, performer, and improviser, serving as titular organist at the Basilica of Sainte-Clotilde in Paris from 1945 to 1988. Langlais was blind from the age of two due to glaucoma and was sent to the National Institute for Blind Children where he began organ studies with André Marchal, a leading blind French organist. He won a prize in organ performance from the famous Paris Conservatory and studied composition with Marcel Dupré and Paul Dukas. He was in great demand as a concert organist, performing widely in Europe and the U.S.

Mors et resurrectio is a depiction of the Christian's transition from death to life. Written on the score is a verse from I Corinthians chapter 15, which states “*Where, O death, is your victory?*” The piece begins very quietly and moves inexorably to the glories of the resurrected life. This is accomplished by very subtle changes in dynamics and changes of color (by the addition of new sounds of the organ). A highly chromatic language is also employed which leaves the listener unsure of where one is at any given point in the journey. This piece convincingly portrays this crucial journey which every Christian experiences at the time of death.

Toccatà in F Major

Recognized today as one of the greatest composers in the history of Western classical music, **Johann Sebastian Bach** had to overcome difficult challenges in his life. He was orphaned at the age of ten, and never attended a university. He played both the organ and violin as a young child, and was a church organist at Arnstadt, Mühlhausen, and court musician at Weimar and Cöthen. He was also the cantor at St. Thomas Church in Leipzig from 1723 until his death in 1750.

A *toccatà* is a virtuosic composition designed to display the keyboard & pedalboard skills of the performer. Typical elements of a *toccatà* include brilliant passage work, sweeping scales, extended pedal solo, and surprising harmonies. Bach's *Toccatà in F Major* begins with two imitative upper voices playing the exact same melody two measures apart, supported by a long-held pedal note. Following this section, the pedal breaks into a rhapsodic solo which explores material from the opening section. These two sections are then repeated in the contrasting dominant key. A new section features an arpeggio figure imitated in all voices. This brief figure implies a change of key every four measures, in contrast to the stability of the opening sections.

An important compositional principle often observed in Bach's music could be described as an "economy of means"; that is, Bach uses a limited set of musical ideas which are re-cast in different ways (sometimes with modifications); this ensures coherence. He also uses fragments from the opening passage of the *toccatà* in all three voices in imitative fashion. While all three voices have this material, they are still distinct:

Presentation	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Musical	A	C	B	(top voice)
Material	B	A	C	(middle voice)
	C	B	A	(lower voice)

One other significant feature of this selection is the use of 'deceptive cadences' to extend the forward motion past the point of expected completion. This may be compared to a relay race in which the initial runner 'passes off the baton' to their teammate, thus extending the race past the initial runner's point of completion.

Partite diverse über "O Gott, du frommer Gott"
(Diverse Variations on 'O God, Thou Faithful God')

A *partita* is a set of variations on a pre-existent secular melody or hymn tune. In this selection the hymn text was written by Johann Heermann in 1630 and consisted of nine stanzas reflecting on the Christian life. The first variation is a straightforward harmonization of the chorale tune. In the second variation, the opening bass line hints at the chorale tune while preparing for the entrance of the complete chorale tune with ornamentation in the right hand. Variation four is a 'perpetual motion' presentation of the embellished chorale melody in the right hand. In variation seven a descending line snakes through two octaves at the beginning and end of this 'minuet-like' setting. Variation eight features extreme chromaticism, which expresses grief, while variation nine is a joyful conclusion with echoes of short phrases and change of register. There is even a highly unusual contrasting middle section played in a slower tempo.

When Love is Found

Aaron David Miller has won international competitions in improvisation and organ performance and is a prolific composer. He has performed at Disney Hall in Los Angeles and at the 2016 National Convention of the American Guild of Organists (AGO). He is also renowned for his organ accompaniment of silent films. He currently serves as Director of Music and Organist at the House of Hope Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, MN. This setting is based on the traditional Scottish tune O WALY WALY. While there are a variety of folk lyrics sung to this tune, it has also been used with other texts, as in ELW 644 (*Although I Speak With Angel's Tongue*). It begins and ends with a haunting, mysterious descending phrase. The folk tune is then soloed out in the right hand against a chordal background. The tune is given three different settings: first simply, then with more elaboration on the second and third statements.

Rubrics: A Liturgical Suite for Organ

IV: 'The peace may be exchanged'

V: 'The people respond – Amen!'

Composer **Dan Locklair** earned a Master of Sacred Music from Union Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Musical Arts from the Eastman School of Music. His music is widely performed and includes many genres such as symphonic works, opera, and numerous solo, chamber, vocal, organ, and choral works. One of his compositions based on a poem by Maya Angelou was performed at the 1993 inauguration of former president Bill Clinton. He is currently a Composer-in-Residence and Professor of Music at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC.

Rubrics was derived from the instructions found in the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, detailing the congregational participation in the liturgy. It has been one of the most frequently performed organ works by an American composer. Selected movements from this work were played at the state funerals of both Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush.

The peace may be exchanged is a quiet meditation featuring an expressive solo melody on the 8' Principal stop (with tremolo), accompanied by four active voices, two in the left hand and two in the pedal.

The people respond –Amen! is an energetic toccata with frequently changing time signatures, and motoric, unpredictable rhythms. The manuals create a swirl of activity while the principal melody is boldly proclaimed in the pedal.

Dr. John Bernthal received his Bachelor of Music degree in organ and church music from Valparaiso University, his Masters of Music degree in organ performance from the Eastman School of Music, and his DMA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

He has served as organist and choirmaster in churches in New York, Texas, and Illinois, and in 1984 he joined the music faculty at Valparaiso University where he taught music theory and organ, and also served as the Associate University Organist.

In 1998 Augsburg Fortress published his collection of hymn introductions and descants for organ and trumpet entitled *Lift High the Cross*, and in 2006, he released a CD entitled *Kaleidoscope: Reflections on 20th Century German Organ Music*, which included both sacred and secular works, and was recorded at the Chapel of the Resurrection of Valparaiso University.

He has also had articles on organ music published in *The Diapason* and *CrossAccent*, the journal of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM).

~ UPCOMING EVENT ~

Sunday, October 22, 2023 ~ 4:00 pm:

Mr. Brian Bartusch, Director of Music and organist at
Christ Lutheran Church, Valparaiso, IN
(the third and final performance in our anniversary concert series)