

Alexander Richard Straus-Fausto, from Ontario, Canada, is in his final year of a Master's degree in organ performance at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, where he studies with Martin Jean. He completed his Bachelor of Music at McGill University Schulich School of Music and his secondary school studies at Michigan's Interlochen Arts Academy. Straus-Fausto has further expanded the organ's reach by creating more than 50 original transcriptions of major orchestral works, reflecting his passion for the symphonic organ as a virtually unlimited medium for artistic expression. He is a member of The Diapason's "20 under 30 Class of 2023," which recognizes artists under the age of 30 who have made significant contributions to the fields of organ and harpsichord performance, organ building, carillon, and church music. In 2023, Straus-Fausto was one of ten semi-finalists in the Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition and a prizewinner in the Royal Canadian College of Organists' Competition. Straus-Fausto undertook a Canada Council-funded summer 2019 concert tour of the UK, playing in historic churches and cathedrals. In 2024, he anticipates returning to Europe for concerts at Coventry Cathedral, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, and Paris's La Madeleine.



BARBARA LISTER-SINK
PIANIST

FRIDAY, APRIL 5
7:30 P.M.

*Complimentary General Admission Seating
A freewill offering will be received.*

An informal gathering immediately follows.

THE PEACE MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF CLEARWATER IN FLORIDA
110 S. Fort Harrison Ave.

PEACE MEMORIAL CONCERTS

presents

ALEXANDER STRAUS-FAUSTO, ORGANIST



THE SEASON OF LENT
10 MARCH 2024
3 P.M.

MUSIC OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Prelude and Fugue in D Major, BWV 532

The Prelude and Fugue in D major is one of Bach’s most joyous organ works. Trumpeting pedal scales and manual fanfares introduce the exuberant Prelude, which is structured in several sections of contrasting character. A more structured, steady “Alla breve” section follows the bravura of the opening. In the alla breve, short melodic themes venture through harmonic sequences while paired with a steadily flowing accompaniment. A dramatic recitative closes the Prelude, featuring daring chord progressions recalling a style often found in organ works of the 17th century Italian and North German composers called discords and suspensions.

The fugue theme is constructed from two repeating patterns, which are relentless in their rhythmic energy and whimsical in their character. Though we now know him as a great composer, during J. S. Bach’s own time he was widely revered as one of the greatest organists of his time, and his prowess for playing the pedals led one contemporary witness to remark that his feet flew across the pedals “as if they had wings.” The writing for pedals is particularly virtuosic in the D major Fugue, Bach challenging his own instrumental skill and coordination through his composition. Ken Cowan

Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now, BWV 655

Glory Be to God on High, BWV 662

Bach’s desire to collect, revise, and perfect The Great Eighteen Organ Chorales in the 1740s likely points to taking stock of his musical library, intending to assemble individual pieces into a cohesive group with the intent of leaving a strong musical legacy. The manuscript of first fifteen chorales survives in Bach’s hand. However, the sixteenth and seventeenth chorales were written out by Johann Altnikol, Bach’s son-in-law, and the eighteenth chorale by an unknown scribe.

– Christopher Jacobson

Prelude and Fugue in B Minor, BWV 544

The Prelude and Fugue in B Minor, BWV 544, is one of the five grand organ prelude and fugues that Bach composed during the Leipzig years. Although the structure of both the Prelude and the Fugue continue to show Vivaldian traits (in the use of ritornello and episode sections, for instance), one sees the new influence of vocal idioms in the pliant, expressive, primarily conjunct melodic materials and a tightening of structural elements. In the Prelude, for instance, there are only four ritornello sections, and the episodes are intensely contrapuntal. In the Fugue, the lengthy middle section, for manual alone, is followed by a return to the main subject, now accompanied by a new and powerful descending countersubject.

– Joan Lippincott

Trio Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, BWV 527 – Vivace

Around 1727-1730, Bach introduced a new organ genre: the trio sonata. The trio sonata –with two melodic instruments and bass, or a soloist and keyboard – had long been a fixture in Baroque chamber music, but the three parts had never been heard before on one instrument. Albert Schweitzer, wrote that “those who have practiced the sonata thoroughly will not actually encounter any more problems in either the old or the modern organ literature. – Mathias Havinga

O Man Bewail Thy Great Sins, BWV 622

One of Bach’s most famous chorale preludes; he uses the same melody in the closing chorus at the end of the first part of the St Matthew Passion. Here he presents a highly ornamented version of the melody above a relatively simple harmonization, with an extraordinary chromatic twist in the final cadence. The text is by Sebald Heyden (1525) and the melody, from the same year, by Matthias Greitter.

– Emma Cleobury

Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor, BWV 582

BWV 582 is Bach’s sole organ composition to bear the title Passacaglia. Its depth, maturity, and sweeping majesty would seem to require it to be the work of an appropriately gray-haired master, but the evidence speaks loudly that Bach could not have been more than twenty-seven years old when he wrote it, sometime between 1708 and 1712.

The eight-bar passacaglia theme is harmonically closed (i.e., it ends in a clear cadence) and is maintained scrupulously throughout the work, although it does not always remain in the bass. The initial statement is followed by twenty variations that lead directly into a fugue with its subject derived from the passacaglia theme. Those variations, described by Robert Schumann as “intertwined so ingeniously that one can never cease to be amazed,” have repeatedly challenged analysts and scholars to find an underlying unifying structure. Theories abound. (Bach scholar Christoph Wolff makes a compelling case for a symmetrical layout.)

The fugue employs the first half of the passacaglia theme for its subject, combining that with several faster-moving countersubjects. Eventually a heaven-rattling chord breaks in with the authority of a thundering Old Testament prophet and brings this altogether titanic composition to an altogether titanic close.

– Scott Foglesong