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Bruce Stevens, organ

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Free Music Concert Series

The Department of Music
Presents in Concert

Bruce Stevens, organist

Monday, April 3, 2017
7:30 p.m.

Cannon Memorial Chapel



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PROGRAM NOTES

These nine short **Renaissance dances** from a variety of sources were probably not originally intended for performance on the organ; however, music in the 16th century and earlier was much less instrument-specific than was later the case, so each dance sounds perfectly at home on the organ and likely was played on chamber organs of the time. The third dance, the so-called *Judentanz*, appears to suggest the modern technique of composing in two keys at once — bitonality. Although some musicologists have recently questioned and explained this as a notational mistake, it nevertheless makes for a charming and funny effect.

Domenico Zipoli was an Italian Baroque composer who ended up working in Córdoba, Argentina, as a Jesuit missionary. Around 1715, he obtained the prestigious post of organist of the Church of the Gesù in Rome, a Jesuit parish and the mother church of The Society of Jesus. At the beginning of the following year, he finished his best known work, a collection of keyboard pieces entitled *Sonate d'intavolatura per organo e cimbalo*. The three pieces heard this evening are for use at various points of the Mass. The jolly Offertorio shows that the Mass in Rome at the time was anything but consistently solemn and serious in character!

The *Orgel-Büchlein* (Little Organ Book) is a small album, about 7½ inches wide and 6 inches high—hence, the term *-lein* or “little”—containing a collection of 45 short chorale preludes for organ. Bach planned for his collection to include 164 chorale preludes covering the entire liturgical year, so he first laid out all the pages for the entire collection by writing the title of each of the chorales at the top of a page in the album. However, he composed only 45 of the planned 164 preludes. These 45 chorale preludes are among the first of Bach's organ compositions with a mature compositional style, in marked contrast to his previous organ works. Although each prelude takes a known Lutheran chorale melody and adds a motivic accompaniment that relates to the chorale's text, Bach also explored a wide diversity of forms in the collection. The *Orgel-Büchlein* is at once (1) a collection of organ music for use at church services, (2) a treatise on composing organ chorale preludes, (3) a pedagogical manual, specifically for playing the organ pedals, and (4) a religious statement with a great variety of musical interpretations and depictions of the chorale texts.

Continued...

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland (Come now, savior of the heathens)

The prevailing downward motion in most of the Advent and Christmas preludes symbolizes the downward motion of Christ to earth. This prayer of man to God uses the "step motive" to symbolize man's yearning for and expectation from the arrival of the Savior on Earth.

In dulci jubilo (In sweet joy)

The Christmas chorale melody is treated as a canon at the octave between soprano and tenor, symbolizing God the Father and the Son. The canon at the octave between alto and bass stops at m. 25, where the justified rhythm first appears and where the soprano-tenor canon stretches to two measures apart. The repeated, evenly played quarter notes near the beginning depict the ringing of bells.

In dir ist Freude (In you is joy)

This is the only prelude in the collection in which the entire chorale melody is not presented continuously. Instead, fragments of the chorale melody are repeated. The spirit of breathless jubilation at the New Year is pervasive.

Herr Gott, nun schleuß den Himmel auf (Lord God, now unlock Heaven)

The bass part, played on the pedals, symbolizes a slow *Totentanz* (Dance of Death). The downward motion in left hand symbolizes everything must die, but the upward motion symbolizes resurrection. This chorale continues Simeon's Song (Nunc dimittis) from the previous prelude "Mit Fried' und Freud' ich fahr' dahin" (With peace and joy I depart) in which Simeon expresses his expectation of death.

O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß (Oh mankind, bewail your great sins)

This Passiontide prelude is the most profoundly expressive of all of Bach's "ornamented chorale preludes." The intense, "tortured" chromaticism in m. 19 and in the last two measures where it underlies the unornamented melody corresponds to text that speaks of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our salvation. The "Adagissimo," indicating extremely slow motion, occurs exactly where text has the word "long" and when the unexpected, almost shocking shift to a C-flat major harmony adds great pathos.

The **Prelude and Fugue in B Minor** is among the group of Bach's last five preludes and fugues for organ—lofty and monumental works in which he attained a perfection and depth of expression not reached before. Written in the 1730s, these five works appeared at a time when contemporary musical style was already changing from the old Baroque to the more effervescent Rococo; however, the master created these sublime works without any concession to changing taste. The B-Minor Prelude and Fugue is related to the composer's great B-Minor Mass not only in key, but also in its intense lyricism, chromatic sequences, and sorrowful mood. The swirling melismas and frequent use of expressive appoggiaturas of the Prelude create a superhuman scope and expression that elevate this piece to a celestial realm, while the steady, relentless theme of the Fugue is developed in an immense panorama ending with a grand intensification when it is heard three times in succession in the pedal as it modulates through higher and higher keys.

Josef Rheinberger, acknowledged as one of the most famous native sons of Liechtenstein, became a leading composer and teacher of composition in Europe (at the Munich Conservatoire) in the second half of the 19th century. He attracted numerous students from abroad, including at least 62 from the U.S.! At the center of his many compositions in every form stand the 20 organ sonatas. These span his adult life and show him as the master of melody and formal "correctness" to the end, qualities which in the day of Brahms were highly admired but which were considered old-fashioned by the time of Wagner-mania in the late 19th century. The lovely **Pastorale from Sonata 12 in D-flat Major** epitomizes his genius for creating and developing mesmerizing, transcendent melodies in a cogent structure in which every note is important.

"The organ is my passion," Mozart once declared. How sad, then, that he did not enrich the organ repertoire with the masterpieces one could imagine coming from his pen. There are accounts of Mozart's prowess at playing the instrument, but of original solo organ music comparable to his symphonies, concertos, or quartets, there is nothing. Gratefully, organists may turn to three major works commissioned toward the end of his short life and composed for tiny mechanical organs attached to and activated to play automatically by clocks. The **Fantasia in F minor, K. 608**, the second of Mozart's three big works written for an automatic organ in a *Flötenuhr* (flute-clock with one set of flute pipes),

Continued...

was composed on March 3rd, 1791 and seems to have been generated at white heat. It falls into three sections. The opening Allegro is built on two themes: the first is mainly homophonic; the second, more suited to contrapuntal treatment, engenders a fugue. A reprise of the opening themes ushers in the Andante, a delicate and graceful air in the relative major key. After this is embellished, a short cadenza leads to a resumption of the opening theme of the Allegro. Beethoven is said to have made a copy of this Fantasia. It is obvious that this work mightily transcends the original trivial medium of performance, the petite *Flötenuhr*, which Mozart said that he detested!

ABOUT THE PERFORMER

Bruce Stevens is active as a recitalist in the United States and Europe. He has played for 21 annual national conventions of the Organ Historical Society and has performed for several regional conventions of the American Guild of Organists and for a national convention of the American Institute of Organbuilders. After receiving degrees in music from the University of Richmond (1969) and the University of Illinois, he moved to Europe, going first to Denmark for a year of organ study in Copenhagen with Finn Viderø and Grethe Krogh. Later he moved to Vienna to become a student of the legendary concert organist and teacher Anton Heiller for several years. He also studied at the Royal School of Church Music near London. Mr. Stevens was a finalist in the American Guild of Organists organ playing competition as well as in other national competitions held in Los Angeles and Fort Wayne. Active as a recording artist, he has recorded seven discs for Raven Recordings, including a series of CDs devoted to Josef Rheinberger's organ sonatas played on various historic American organs. Volume 5 in this series will be released next month. Mr. Stevens served for many years as the organist of Richmond's Second Presbyterian Church and, previously, as the director of music and organist of St. James's Episcopal Church. He is instructor in organ at the University of Richmond and director of Historic Organ Study Tours (HOST), which he founded in 1994 to further the study of historic pipe organs in Europe.

1961 Rudolf von Beckerath Organ

Hauptwerk 56 notes	Positiv 56 notes	Pedal 32 notes
Quintadena 16	Holzgedackt 8	Prinzipal 16
Prinzipal 8	Prinzipal 4	Metallflöte 8
Rohrflöte 8	Rohrflöte 4	Oktave 4
Oktave 4	Oktave 2	Nachthorn 2
Spielflöte 4	Oktave 1	Rauschpfeife 3 fach
Nasat 2-2/3	Sesquialter 2 fach	Mixtur 5 fach
Flachflöte 2	Scharf 3-4 fach	Fagott 16
Mixtur 4-6 fach	Dulzian 8 (2014)	Trompete 8
Trompete 8	Tremolo	Schalmei 4
Pos.Hw.		Hw./Ped.
		Pos./Ped.

Zimbelstern (2014)

Mechanical key and stop actions

Equal temperament

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Sunday, April 9 | 3 p.m.

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Monday, April 10 | 7:30 p.m.

UR Chamber Ensembles

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