11-15-2003

Mary Beth Bennett, organ

Department of Music, University of Richmond

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.richmond.edu/all-music-programs

Part of the Music Performance Commons

Recommended Citation

Department of Music, University of Richmond, "Mary Beth Bennett, organ" (2003). Music Department Concert Programs. 309.
https://scholarship.richmond.edu/all-music-programs/309

This Program is brought to you for free and open access by the Music at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Music Department Concert Programs by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.
Mary Beth Bennett, organ

November 15, 2003, 7:30 PM
Cannon Memorial Chapel
Sonata IV, op. 65, no. 4 (1844/45)  Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

I. Allegro con brio 

II. Andante religioso

III. Allegretto

IV. Allegro maestoso e vivace

Felix Mendelssohn lived a relatively short but musically prolific life. Often thought of today as a link between the Baroque and Romantic, his compositions reflect an interest in Protestant church music (particularly that of J.S. Bach), and a fine command of contrapuntal writing. These characteristics, coupled with his tuneful melodies and satisfying harmonies, make Mendelssohn’s music technically solid yet accessible to every audience. Sonata IV in B-flat major begins with a joyous cascade of sixteenth notes which flow from voice to voice. Mendelssohn alternates this flowing texture with a march-like melody harmonized with heavier block chords. Despite its overly sentimental title, Andante religioso (Mvt. II) is a simple and quiet harmonization of a hymn-like melody. One does hear the melody in differing textures, sometimes even treated as a solo, yet the music remains calm and serene throughout. Movement III, Allegretto, begins with a lovely flowing line of accompaniment. Over this figure, Mendelssohn skillfully places a melancholy melody which moves above and below the accompaniment, finally combining into a duet toward the end. The final movement begins in an unusual way with massive majestic chords: not in root position, but in inverted position. They flow into a brisk fugue on a wedge-like subject which catapults the music forward, building momentum. Finally, the fugue is crowned by a reprise of the majestic opening chords, bringing Sonata IV to a triumphant close.

Sonata for Organ, op. 86 (1961)  Vincent Persichetti

I. Andante-Allegro

II. Larghetto

III. Vivace

Vincent Persichetti, an important American educator and composer of the twentieth century, composed music in a very eclectic style and for almost every musical medium. Having held positions at the Juilliard School in
New York City and the Philadelphia Conservatory, Persichetti was also involved in church music and composed a significant body of work for the organ. While some of his organ works might be considered a little out of place in a church service, certainly the Sonata for Organ is a tour de force for a performer on the concert stage. Persichetti’s music displays great skill in fusing classicism, romanticism and stark modernism. The Sonata is a neo-classical work written in traditional forms, but using a polytonal melodic palette: he composes in two or more keys at the same time. This technique produces some odd juxtapositions and some monumental chord structures, yet the overall effect is one that satisfies and exhilarates. The first movement begins with a quizzical and halting motive in the reed stop. A sprightly dance soon follows and builds to a huge crescendo, only to drop off and then repeat. The movement ends with another massive crescendo, finally closing with a mighty crash in the pedals. Movement II is a traditional soft, slow and lyrical composition with a freely ornamented melody in the soprano line accompanied by the left hand and pedal. Movement III, which begins in the pedal, is a brilliant virtuoso toccata which moves at blinding speed through key after key. At the midpoint, the music slows bit by bit as if it were a clock winding down, and then stops. Immediately, we hear a bravura repetition of the opening pedal motive and are thrown headlong into the closing toccata, ending the work with another pedal crash and a massive polytonal chord.

Symphonie gothique, op. 70 (1895)  
Charles-Marie Widor  
(1844-1937)

Between 1870 and 1901, Charles-Marie Widor, the eminent French organist, teacher and composer, produced ten large compositions for organ which he called symphonies. While they did not all follow the form of a classical orchestral symphony, nor did they use orchestral instruments, they were written for the French “symphonic organ” made popular during this period by the revolutionary organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. These organs were much larger than French instruments built up to this point. They contained many stops which were more “orchestral” in nature: many which could be combined (like an orchestra string section), and many more solo stops. Widor, who presided over the magnificent Cavaillé-Coll organ of St. Sulpice Church in Paris for decades, was a virtuoso performer, a first-rate
composer and a highly regarded teacher who influenced generations of organists, organ builders, composers and church musicians. This movement, which highlights the flute stops of the organ, was intended to evoke the calm serenity of the nave (main body) of St. Sulpice. While the instrument on which we hear the piece played today is certainly not a French symphonic organ, the beautiful flute stops which will be used are most definitely “magnifique!”

Johann Sebastian Bach was an organist, conductor and composer who lived and worked in the courts and churches of eighteenth-century Germany, spending the final years of his career at the famous Thomaskirche (St. Thomas Church) in Leipzig. In addition to his many duties at the church, he was required to write a huge amount of choral music for the services, which for years included the composition of an entire cantata every week. It is then even more amazing to recognize the voluminous amounts of music he found time to compose in addition to his other responsibilities. The third part of the *Clavierübung* is an example of such work. A complete setting of organ works based on the Lutheran tunes of the German Mass, this collection of chorale preludes is framed by his last two free organ works, the Prelude and Fugue in E-flat major which we hear today. The Prelude is in three distinct styles. It begins in the style of a French overture - sturdy and heroic. The following section is made up of short chords descending lightly down the keyboard and repeating as an echo. The third section is a fugue with a gripping, syncopated subject descending in whirling sixteenth-note figurations. Some historians have conjectured that the first section is symbolic of God, the Majestic Father; the second of Christ, the Son come to earth in human form; and the third, the descent and diffusion of the Holy Spirit. The fugue is often nicknamed the “St. Anne” because of its uncanny resemblance to the hymn tune “St. Anne” ("O God Our Help in Ages Past"). There is no evidence that Bach knew this tune or intended the correlation, but the name has remained. A favorite of organists and audiences alike, the “St. Anne” is a sublime fugue with three subjects, separate fugal expositions of each of these subjects and a final combining of all three. Father, Son and Holy Spirit in perfect concord finish the fugue and serve to sum up and complete the entire German organ mass.

...INTERMISSION...
Partita on “Veni, Creator Spiritus” (1986) Mary Beth Bennett

I. Recitative - Chorale

II. Bicinium

III. Aria

IV. Hocket - Cadenza - Toccata

Partita on “Veni Creator Spiritus” (Come, Creator Spirit) was written for a composition competition sponsored by the 1986 Far-Western Regional Convention of the American Guild of Organists, a competition which it subsequently won. The piece was to be written within strict time limitations and needed to explore the colors of the organ while being versatile enough to work on any size instrument. The result was a seven-minute, highly condensed, yet varied and colorful treatment of the Pentecost chant “Veni, Creator Spiritus.” The work is built on selected portions of the chant tune, setting them in short contrasting movements. The first phrase is set several times, first as a free introductory recitative, and then as a chorale. The Bicinium is a bright, unpredictable yet playful duo for two keyboards. The Aria which follows is a darker, more mysterious and modal treatment of the melody, reminiscent of the cantus firmus chorale preludes of J.S. Bach. Finally, the Hocket (a medieval musical form meant to sound like a hiccup) moves contrapuntally into a rhapsodic pedal cadenza, and then on to the final brief toccata where the entire unaltered melody may be heard prominently stated in the pedal.

Postlude pour l’Office de Complies (1930) Jehan Alain

Jehan Alain’s organ works are unique in the organ literature because almost all of what we have published today has been reconstructed from his sketches and through the prodigious memory and work of his sister, the world renowned organist, Marie-Claire Alain. Madame Alain was only five years old when her older brother, Jehan, was killed in World War II. A child prodigy, she was able to remember her brother playing his works well enough to reconstruct them from his sketches when she grew older. The result is some of the most striking and original organ music of the twentieth century. This
Postlude for the Office of Compline was inspired by the chapel of the Benedictine Abbey in Valloires, France. It is one of Madame Alain’s reconstructions, yet even in the published version, much of the chant melody has no written rhythm; it is left up to the performer to decide how to weave the melody and the sighing accompaniment together. Throughout the score, corresponding textual quotations are included from the Office of Compline. At the outset of the piece, all that is heard is a slow, sighing motive which gently rocks back and forth. The chant melody enters high above “Have mercy on me, Oh Lord, hear my prayer.” It is one of those sung during Compline, the last of eight services sung each day in monastic life, and is traditionally sung around 9:00 PM, the same time you will be hearing the organ work tonight. The chant continues, “Now, with the fast departing light, Maker of All, we ask of Thee, of Thy great mercy, through the night, our guardian and defense to be. Into Thy hands, Oh Lord, I commend my spirit. Amen.”

Phantasie für eine Orgelwalze, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
K. 608 (1791) (1756-1791)

(Transcribed for organ by Mary Beth Bennett)

The eighteenth century witnessed some unusual developments in the field of musical instruments. A little known but important instrument for composers of organ music during this period was the organ-clock. The organ-clock was a mechanical instrument that produced music by means of cylinders and a few rows of pipes. It was not unlike a player piano but had to be either pumped or wound up to play. These instruments were popular fixtures in, of all places, cemeteries, and might have been forgotten had it not been for Mozart, Beethoven and Cherubini, who actually wrote their best organ music for just such a clock. When one sees the four-part score for the Phantasie, K. 608, it is not hard to imagine that Mozart would have much preferred the piece on a fine larger pipe organ. With this in mind, organists have transcribed the piece (which, in its original form is unplayable by one person) for organ many times. I first saw the four-part score while a graduate student at the Eastman School of Music.
I realized that all the transcriptions available did not allow for proper voice leading in this very linear piece, nor did they take advantage of the technical abilities of modern pedaling and fingering to correct the problems. I undertook to create a transcription that would incorporate a musical result more faithful to the spirit of the original as well as the technical aspects of the open score. The result is what you will hear tonight. The piece opens with a chordal allegro in F minor and continues with a fugue and another chordal allegro in F-sharp minor. There follows a sweet andante in A-flat major. Light and buoyant, its many intertwining lines are played by using both hands and both feet in order to include all the voices. At the end of the andante, a series of scales and trills grow increasingly louder until we arrive at another chordal allegro - this time in A-flat major. The piece ends with a brief double fugue in stretto, bringing the work to a final tumultuous close.

(Notes by Mary Beth Bennett)
Dr. Mary Beth Bennett is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music at The University of Richmond and Adjunct Instructor of Music at Hampton University. She also serves as Organist/Choirmaster of Seventh Street Christian Church in Richmond. An active recitalist, composer and improviser, she is the winner of eight national and regional competitions in organ and composition. She has served as judge for the National Competition in Organ Improvisation of the American Guild of Organists and has conducted workshops in organ and improvisation for conventions of the AGO, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians and the Smithsonian Institution. As a composer, she has received commissions from various choral and instrumental ensembles, the American Guild of Organists, Paul VI Institute for the Arts, churches and private parties. Her recently commissioned major work for organ and brass, “Preludes to the Apocalypse,” will be premiered at the 2004 National AGO Convention in Los Angeles.

Bennett holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music, Stetson University, the State Conservatory for Music in Cologne, Germany, and the University of Southern California, where she also focused on musicology and held a teaching assistantship. Her research interests include chant-based keyboard music of twentieth-century France, and the international and cross-denominational influences within hymnody. Her teachers have included David Craighead, Paul Jenkins, Paul Manz, Michael Schneider, James Hopkins, Ladd Thomas and Cherry Rhodes. She is a performing member of The Liturgical Organists Consortium, whose recordings have garnered critical acclaim, and both her live improvisations and her recorded performances have been broadcast on NPR’s Pipedreams, with Michael Barone.
The organ was designed and built by Rudolf von Beckerath of Hamburg, Germany

**SPECIFICATIONS**

**HAUPTWERK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Quintadena</th>
<th>16'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Prinzipal</td>
<td>8'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rohrfloete</td>
<td>8'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Oktave</td>
<td>4'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Spielfloete</td>
<td>4'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nasat</td>
<td>2 2/3'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Flachfloete</td>
<td>2'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mixtur</td>
<td>4-6r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Trompete</td>
<td>8'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POSITIV**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. Gedackt</th>
<th>8'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Prinzipal</td>
<td>4'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Rohrfloete</td>
<td>4'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Oktave</td>
<td>2'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Oktave</td>
<td>1'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Sesquialter</td>
<td>2r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Scharf 3-4r.</td>
<td>2/3'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Baerpfeife</td>
<td>8'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PEDAL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18. Prinzipal</th>
<th>16'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Metallflöte</td>
<td>8'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Oktave</td>
<td>4'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Nachthorn</td>
<td>2'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Rauschpfeife</td>
<td>3r.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Mixtur 5r.</td>
<td>2'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Fagott</td>
<td>16'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Trompete</td>
<td>8'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Schalmei</td>
<td>4'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COUPLERS:**

- Positiv to Hauptwerk
- Hauptwerk to Pedal
- Positiv to Pedal

Tracker Action

Wind Pressure: 2 1/4-2 1/2"
2003-2004 Performance Series  (Partial Listing)

University Wind Ensemble
Sunday, November 16, 2003, 3 pm
Camp Concert Hall
Free and open to the public.

James Gates and Friends
Thursday, November 20, 2003, 7:30 pm
Perkinson Recital Hall
Free and open to the public.

University Jazz Ensemble
Monday, November 24, 2003, 7:30 pm
Camp Concert Hall
Free and open to the public.

Moby Dick
Thursday, November 20, 2003, 7:30
Friday, November 21, 2003, 7:30 pm
Saturday, November 22, 2003, 7:30
Sunday, November 23, 2003, 2 pm
Alice Jepson Theatre
Call 289-8980 for ticket information.

University Chamber Music Ensembles
Monday, December 1, 2003, 7:30 pm
Camp Concert Hall
Free and open to the public

Intercollegiate Orchestra
Wednesday, December 3, 2003, 7:30
Camp Concert Hall
Free and open to the public.