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### Bruce Stevens, organ

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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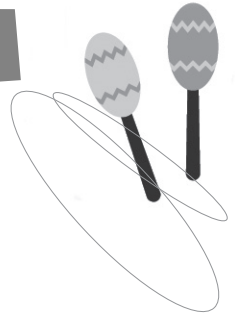
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**UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**



**CONCERT SERIES** Fall 2021-Spring 2022

## **Bruce Stevens, organ**

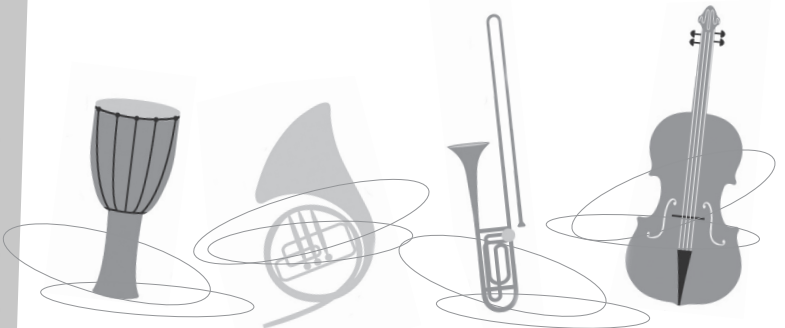
**Monday, March 28, 2022**

**7:30 p.m**

**Cannon Memorial Chapel**



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## PROGRAM

Fantasia in G Major, BWV 572  
Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

Trio in E-flat Major, Krebs-WV 442  
*Adagio – Non troppo Allegro*  
Johann Ludwig Krebs  
(1713-1780)

Toccata and Fugue in D (“Dorian”), BWV 538  
Bach

Chorale Prelude on “Erbarm dich mein, O Herre Gott”  
 (“Have mercy on me, O Lord God”), BWV 721  
Bach

Prelude and Fugue in C Minor, op. 37, no. 1  
Felix Mendelssohn  
(1809-1847)

Pause

Eleven Chorale Preludes, op. posth. 122  
10. Herzlich tut mich verlangen  
 (“My heart is filled with longing”)  
Johannes Brahms  
(1809-1847)

Twelve Miscellanies, op. 174  
3. Aufschwung (“Recovery”)  
9. Ricercare  
6. Improvisation  
12. Finale  
Josef Rheinberger  
(1839-1901)

Fugue in G Major (“Jig”), BWV 577  
Bach

## PROGRAM NOTES

Max Reger once wrote, “Bach is the beginning and end of all music.” Wagner called Bach “the most stupendous miracle in all of music!” For more than three centuries, Johann Sebastian Bach’s music, and particularly the total mastery of counterpoint it displays, has astonished composers, performers, and listeners. He seldom set foot beyond Thuringia or Saxony, and little of his music was published during his lifetime. Yet he had a more profound influence on the composers who followed in his wake than any other composer in the history of Western music.

Musicians from both the classical and popular music worlds have learned much from him. Among the great classical composers, those such as Telemann, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven (who as a twelve-year-old, mastered the preludes and fugues of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* long before they appeared in print), Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Brahms, Bruckner, Gounod, Liszt, Wagner, Reger, Shostakovich, Villa-Lobos, and Castelnuovo-Tedesco owe a great debt to Bach’s music. Put another way, if Bach had not existed, the music of many later composers would not have been what it was. Perhaps it would not have been as rich...we shall never know. But it would have been different.

In the sphere of organ music, Bach is the undisputed master. His compositions in the form of preludes, fugues, toccatas, fantasias, trios, chorale preludes, chorale fantasias, chorale variations, and several lesser forms are the epitome of all such organ works.

Bach’s **Fantasia in G Major** is a brilliant work titled *Piece d’Orgue* in the earliest sources, all of which are copies made by others because no autograph survives. The structure is really a three-part toccata consisting of a cheerful opening of quick, unaccompanied broken chords followed by a mighty *alla breve* contrapuntal movement in five parts and finishing with a second toccata of rapidly ascending scales against a slowly descending, chromatic bass.

*Continued ...*

**Johann Ludwig Krebs** was one of Bach's star pupils, learning both organ playing and composition from the master. His **Trio in E-flat Major** reflects his teacher's fondness for writing organ works in trio texture with three different organ sounds played by right hand, left hand, and feet. However, in keeping with the emerging Rococo style, Krebs' piece is clearly less involved with counterpoint and more focused on charming tunefulness. The two upper voices parallel each other in sweet sixths and thirds much of the time, while the bass is mostly reduced to simply punctuating the harmonic progressions. Even the two-movement, slow-fast structure of the work is a simplification of Bach's three-movement, fast-slow-fast trio sonatas.

The so-called "**Dorian**" **Toccata and Fugue** is not in the Dorian mode at all but is really in D minor. The nickname comes from the fact that there is no B-flat key signature; instead, all the necessary B-flats are written as added accidentals. The Toccata lives up to its name by featuring a driving stream of fast sixteenth notes throughout. The manual changes are written by the composer — an unusual procedure of the time, which creates a dialogue between the *Hauptwerk* (main division) of the organ and the *Positiv* (secondary division). The Fugue is a towering tour de force balancing a slow-moving subject with two active countersubjects during an elaborate journey to a triumphant conclusion.

**Felix Mendelssohn** has been credited with the revival of interest in Bach's music by his production and conducting of a performance of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* on March 11, 1829, in Berlin's *Singakademie*. The work had become essentially unknown by that time, and this performance elicited an enthusiastic response and great interest in Bach's music in general. Mendelssohn's own organ works — six multi-movement sonatas, three preludes and fugues, and a few other pieces — pay homage to Bach in their form, contrapuntal texture, and dramatic expression. This **Prelude and Fugue in C Minor** would have pleased old Bach greatly!

**Johannes Brahms** wrote, "Study Bach. There you will find everything." Brahms' last compositions, his **Eleven Chorale Preludes, op. 122**, based on Lutheran chorales, certainly reflect

Bach's many organ chorale preludes in their various treatments of chorale melodies. In the setting heard this evening, the chorale melody appears in long, unadorned notes in the tenor voice accompanied by a pulsating accompaniment, also featuring steadily flowing notes that are twice the speed of the pulsating notes. The similarity to Bach's chorale prelude on "Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ" in his *Orgelbüchlein* is unmistakable. Additionally, one can make a direct comparison to **Bach's Chorale Prelude on "Erbarm dich mein,"** with its pulsating accompaniment to the chorale melody sounding in long, unadorned notes in the soprano voice. Coincidence? Perhaps not. One can easily imagine that Brahms borrowed Bach's very simple concepts in these two pieces to create this emotionally touching setting of the "Passion Chorale."

As a notably conservative composer for his time, **Josef Rheinberger** most admired the music of Mendelssohn, Schumann, Schubert, Brahms, and, above all, Bach. He arranged Bach's *Goldberg Variations* for two pianos, and when teaching organ to his many foreign students, the repertoire studied consisted of only Bach, Mendelssohn, and Rheinberger! More importantly, Rheinberger excelled at writing masterful fugues and other forms of counterpoint. In February of 1893, Rheinberger returned to composing for his favorite instrument after a long period of inactivity due to the illness and death of his beloved wife, Franziska, the year before. He wrote the **Miscellanies** within a brief timespan. These are short "character pieces," each expressing a certain mood and emotion. *Aufschwung*, a term meaning "upswing," "improvement," or "recovery," is a sweeping and exuberant song without words that likely refers to Rheinberger's emotional progress since Franziska's passing. *Ricercare*, an Italian term used in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries for an instrumental composition in fugal or canonic style, here refers to the staccato fugal theme that opens the piece and then romps its way throughout, darting on and off stage as a sort of sprightly Puck. This theme combined with the swinging six-four rhythm gives the work a sunny optimism.

*Continued ...*

*Improvisation* shows the composer, known as a master of melody, at his introspective best. The poignant melody floating above the gently rocking accompaniment in six-eight time rivals the best of Chopin's nocturnes. *Finale* is a majestic, three-quarter-time march in F major that could equally well accompany a stately entrance as well as an exit. The march is interrupted by a second theme in the form of a well-developed fugato section. Rheinberger was also a master of modulation, so when the march resumes, we find ourselves in the remote key of A-flat major. Before returning to F major, the composer takes us on a short visit to the even more distant tonality of D-flat major. But return we must, and at the final cadence in F major, Rheinberger uses an extended coda over an F pedal point to include some restatements of the fugato theme, tying up the finale tidily.

The adjectives “jolly,” “fun,” and “merry” are not words we generally associate with Bach's music, but he was known to write an occasional comic cantata, pen a cheerful work of chamber or keyboard music, or dance a jig. The so-called **Jig Fugue** is a favorite example of the composer in a light-hearted mood. Other composers, such as Buxtehude and Pachelbel, had written fugues in similar style before, but Bach was the first and only composer to write one with an obbligato pedal part.

**Bruce Stevens** is active as a recitalist in the United States and Europe. He has played recitals 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 two national conventions 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. Mr. Stevens served for 16 years as the organist of Richmond's Second Presbyterian Church and, previously, for 12 years as the director of music and organist of St. James's Episcopal Church. He is Instructor of 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.





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