

Guest Artist
Zach Klobnak, organ
University of Florida
University Auditorium
Tuesday, March 19, 2013
7:30 pm

Program –

Processional [1964]	William Mathias (1934-1992)
Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele, BWV 654	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Preludium et Fuga in D major, BWV 532	J. S. Bach
Symphonie IV, Opus 13 [1901] I. Toccata II. Fugue III. Andante cantabile IV. Scherzo V. Adagio VI. Finale	Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)

Program Notes –

Welsh organist William Mathias has sixteen published organ works to his credit. Unlike many British organist-composers of his generation, Mathias did not grow up hearing much of the standard Anglican church music that has influenced his contemporaries. Raised a nonconformist, Mathias wrote, “I heard the organ quite often, but not always terribly well played.” His music was written at the time of the rise of the eclectic Classical organ in Britain, and thus has a special fondness for features such as dance rhythms, syncopation, dense chordal progressions, cluster chords, and parallel voice leading (namely perfect fourths and perfect fifths). His *Processional* is in a rondo march style, with an attractive, forthright melody heard on some of the strongest solo stops of the instrument. The organum-like parallel chains of perfect fifths, found throughout the piece, provide a medieval ambiance.

J. S. Bach’s *oeuvre* for organ consists of pieces written on pre-existing melodies, known as *chorale preludes*, and pieces that are freely composed. This program contains one such work of both types. The chorale prelude *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* is found in the collection known as “The Leipzig Chorales,” so-called because they are pieces that were written (or re-worked) during his tenure at the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, Germany, near the end of his life. His purpose for the collection seems to be paying homage to several great German organists who

came before him – Johann Pachelbel, Dietrich Buxtehude, and Georg Böhm – as they were all masters at setting chorale melodies in organ compositions.

The chorale has a Eucharistic text:

Soul, adorn yourself with gladness, leave the gloomy haunts of sadness,
come into the daylight's splendor, there with joy your praises render.

Bless the one whose grace unbounded this amazing banquet founded;

Christ, though heavenly, high, and holy, deigns to dwell with you most lowly.

Bach – a true master at setting Lutheran texts for organ – seems to take the opening line of text to heart here, presenting the *cantus firmus* in ornamented fashion throughout. This chorale prelude is characteristic for its striding continuo-like bass in a *sarabande* dance rhythm, *ritornello* form, and sense of effortless melody.

Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn are two composers from the Romantic era that had much affinity for Bach's music. In reference to this chorale setting, Schumann said, "[It is] as priceless, deep, and full of soul as any piece of music that ever sprang from a true artist's imagination." Likewise, after Mendelssohn performed the work in Leipzig's St. Thomas Church, he remarked, "If life had taken away all faith and hope, this chorale alone would have sufficed to restore them."

Musicological scholarship suggests the *Praeludium et Fuga in D major* were not written at the same time. The prelude, in its through-composed, sectional form, seems influenced by Buxtehude. It opens with fanfare-like flourishes of the D major scale followed by dotted figures and tremolo chords over a mediant pedal point. An *alle breve* section, whose harmonic language is conservative, assumes the inner-most framework, and the prelude ends with an *adagio* section of greater harmonic interest – diminished seventh chords, augmented triads, Neopolitan-sixth chords, etc. The fugue, on the other hand, with its long subject, seems to come later. A *tour-de-force*, of sorts, the fugue ends as the prelude began with arpeggiated pedal motions outlining the D major scale. Wilhelm Hieronymus Pachelbel's manuscript of this piece contains the following footnote: "Nota Bey dieser Fuge muss man die Füße recht stampeln lassen" / "note that in this fugue one must let the feet really kick about."

Without a doubt, Charles-Marie Widor's greatest compositional achievement is his 10 organ symphonies – a large-scale project spanning the final three decades of the nineteenth century. The first four of these symphonies belong to Opus 13, where a still predominantly Classical Widor combines principles of composition absorbed as a student with youthful enthusiasm and the pursuit of his own musical language. *Symphonie IV* was originally conceived and published in 1872, but, after years of revision, it reached its present and final form in 1901.

Despite evidence proving otherwise, Widor maintained, by way of his teacher Jacques Lemmens, that he had a direct pedagogical lineage to J. S. Bach. (Lemmens had studied with Adolf Friedrich Hesse, who was a student of Bach's pupil Johann Nikolaus Forkel.) Widor took great pride in this and dedicated much of his life to the study, performance, and editing of Bach's organ works. Given this, perhaps it is no coincidence that this symphony opens with two movements that seem to pay homage to Bach: a toccata and fugue. The toccata is reminiscent of the *French overture* style and full of Baroque ornamentation; a dotted rhythm and full-organ

robust chords alternate with *recitativo* sections. The scalar passages of the fugue relate back to the toccata.

The *andante cantabile* is a set of three through-composed song-like variations; the accompanying material changes for each variation: eighth notes the first time, triplets the second, and sixteenth notes for the final variation. The lyric melody here highlights Widor's likeness for writing art songs; he wrote over 70 during his career. Each variation is divided by an interlude featuring the *clarinette* stop of the organ. This movement was played by Marcel Dupré during the *Consecration* at Widor's funeral mass.

The *scherzo*, reminiscent of a Mendelssohn-like gracefulness, is in a strict *rondo* form. The lively rhythm and playful staccato of the opening theme is contrasted with the more static character of the inner trio that features a canon at the octave over double pedal. The opening staccato section returns, followed by a coda, where the trio theme is heard again over a tonic pedal point.

In the *adagio*, Widor seems to be highlighting two of the many colors of the famed *Cavaillé-Coll organ*. This meditative section opens with a four-voice texture on the *voix humaine* stop. Indeed, this is the only movement in all ten symphonies where Widor calls for this sound color. It closes in great beauty with a solo on the *flûte harmonique*, supported by an orchestral *pizzicato bass*. Very typically Widorian, this movement serves as the “calm before the stormy final movement.” A true *Grand-Choeur Finale*, this closing movement is again in a tripartite structure: a homophonic F-major section in triple time, an inner section marked by running triplets in the relative minor, and – after a modulation through D-flat and a dominant pedal point – a return to the opening homophonic material brings the symphony to a dramatic close.

About the performer –

Originally from Knoxville, Iowa, Zach Klobnak is a doctoral student in organ performance and literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. During the 2011-12 academic year, he held the Marcella K. Brownson Fellowship for organ studies. He earned a Master of Music degree from the University of Florida, Gainesville, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. His principal organ teachers include Dana Robinson, Laura Ellis, Gregory Peterson, and William Kuhlman; he has also studied harpsichord with Kathryn Reed and choral conducting with Donald Nally, Fred Stoltzfus, and Timothy Peter.

Prior to moving to Illinois, Zach was Director of Music at All Saints Episcopal Church in Jacksonville, Florida, where he was organist for all parish liturgies, oversaw a program of adult, children, and handbell choirs, and founded and administered the annual *Music Through the Ages* concert series. He has served as Organist at Wesley United Methodist Church and Foundation in Urbana, Illinois since 2011. Zach is an active member of the American Guild of Organists and the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians and has performed for both organizations as well as in churches throughout Florida. In his spare time, he is an avid runner, a yoga enthusiast, and a self-proclaimed political junkie.