

Stephanie Smith, organ
Graduate Recital
Friday, April 3, 2009
University Auditorium
7:30 p.m.

Processional, Op. 96 William Mathias (1934-1992)

Prelude and Fugue in C Major, BWV 547 Johann Sebastian Bach (1675-1750)

Pièces de Fantaisie, Op. 53 Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

V. "Claire de lune"

Sonate No. 1 - Organ Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

I. Mäßig schnell – Lebhaft

II. Sehr langsam – Phantasie, frei – Ruhig bewegt

Symphony No. 5, Op. 42 Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)

III. Andantino quasi allegretto

IV. Adagio

V. Toccata

William Mathias is known as one of the prominent Welsh composers of the twentieth century. The son of an organist, Mathias was a prolific composer of Anglican choral anthems as well as instrumental works, often to international acclaim. Although the Processional is a standard rhythmic march, some sections contain harmonic interest provided by open fifths in opposition to quartal harmony, as well as major seventh chords. Some composers who influenced his work in a harmonic sense are Bela Bartók and Paul Hindemith. The work at hand, which employs a triumphant laughing motive, is "Dedicated to Christopher Morris, musician, publisher, friend."

Johann Sebastian Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C Major, known as the 9/8 because of the compound meter, was most likely composed during his mature Leipzig period. The many interrelating qualities shared by the prelude and the fugue result in a jigsaw puzzle-like cohesion. The prelude is based upon a clear scalar statement which undergoes extensive alteration and development in a variety of key centers. These sections are linked by modulating cascading material. The pedal punctuates the prominent beats of the gigue dance form. The fugue begins with a statement of the subject in alto, followed by statements in the tenor, bass and soprano voices. Throughout the first two-thirds of the fugue, only these four voices occur. Scholarship establishes this to be Bach's fugue containing the greatest number of entries, for there are at least forty-two entries of the subject—both real and a partially inverted version—and numerous false entries. Following an arpeggiated diminished seventh chord, the pedal enters, providing yet a fifth voice, which states in augmentation both the original fugue subject and also the

partially inverted subject. The codetta contains cascading material reminiscent of both the prelude and the fugue.

Among other works, the French organist Louis Vierne composed twenty-four fantasy pieces cataloged into four suites. All six pieces of Suite II of the *Pièces de Fantaisie* are dedicated to Americans of personal significance to the composer. “Claire de lune” contains a prefatory dedication: “à mon ami Ernest Skinner.” Skinner was a Boston organ builder, whose firm, the Skinner Organ Company, built and installed the original organ in the University of Florida Memorial Auditorium in 1925. “Claire de lune” is a sectional, programmatic work, and the lush chromatic harmonies and registrational colors prescribed in the score, as well as arpeggiation in the left hand provide a picturesque depiction of moonlight shimmering on the earth. A sweeping, lyric melody in a higher register on the prominent manual might suggest the moon’s traverse across the sky. Occasional rests could portray moonlight sometimes obscured by clouds or shadowed by trees. The pedal sings along in chromatic movement, becoming the prominent voice in some sections. Vierne was a student of the French masters César Franck, Charles-Marie Widor and Alexandre Guilmant. His secondary instrument was the violin, which surely influenced his composition of expressive melodic lines. His personal life included a tragic youth. He was born blind and suffered the deaths of his beloved younger sister, his uncle, an organist who strongly encouraged him, his father, and his first organ teacher, César Franck. Through his faith he continued his music, creating beauty in the face of tragedy. At Vierne’s wedding ceremony, Widor played the organ, and the reception was held at the organ shop of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. Vierne’s death occurred on the bench of the organ at Notre Dame, Paris, where he had served for 37 years.

Paul Hindemith’s first of three sonatas for organ is replete with rhythmic and harmonic interest. It also contains elements from several compositional styles. In some ways it is Neo-baroque due to Bachian counterpoint and Baroque gestures; the form and clarity suggest Neo-classical; and its harmony and lyricism propose Neo-romantic. The renown organist Dame Gillian Weir noted that it is impressive that Hindemith, although he was not an organist, was able to compose so effectively for organ. He was a prominent German composer who immigrated to the United States in 1940 and took U.S. citizenship in 1946, although his residence was very cosmopolitan during his latter years. His harmonic language is based upon his own system of the twelve tones of the chromatic scale employed freely where there is no hierarchy among the tones. Compositionally, his overall style is melodic and thematic, modulating from one tonal center to another, and retaining the refreshing concept of resolving from dissonance to consonance.

Charles-Marie Widor is best known for his ten organ symphonies, in which he composed for the sonorous palette of the Cavaillé-Coll organ at Ste. Sulpice in Paris. Widor artfully matches the organ colors with a nineteenth-century symphonic style. The third movement of the Fifth Symphony is boisterous, containing two main themes. The introductory material is based upon these two themes. The first theme employs a strong three-beat pattern in the pedal, and undergoes alteration by variation. The second theme, grand and melodic, is stated toward the beginning, and then after development of the first theme, and following a central section containing exoticism, the movement ends with a ritornello

of the first theme and a coda containing elements of both themes. The fourth movement, Adagio, is in the style of an adagio for strings, and contains a lyric pedal solo, which ends with double pedal. Of his organ symphonies, the Fifth Symphony is the most played, and its most popular movement is the concluding Toccata. An important accomplishment of Widor's career is his edition of the complete organ works of J. S. Bach in collaboration with the theologian Albert Schweitzer, who was also Widor's organ student. Widor became Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatory upon the death of César Franck, inheriting the students Louis Vierne and Charles Tournemire. Later, as Professor of Composition, he instructed such notables as Arthur Honegger, Edgard Varèse, Darius Milhaud and Marcel Dupré. Widor served as organist at Ste. Sulpice for sixty-four years.