



UF PIPE ORGAN
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Zach Klobnak
A Celebration of Women Composers
Alumni Recital Series
Thursday, March 6, 2025
7:20 p.m.
University Auditorium

Program

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| Prelude for Organ | Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805-1847) |
| Exodus: A Tribute to Harriet Tubman | Sharon J. Willis (b. 1949) |
| I. Chronicles upon a Passacaglia | |
| II. Communion: A Rite of Fellowship | |
| III. Celebration on a Juba | |
| from <i>Douze Courtes Pièces pour orgue, Opus 43</i> | Rachel Laurin (1961-2023) |
| Invocation | |
| Rondo | |
| Cantilène | |
| Toccatina | |
| Répons pour le Temps de Pâques | Jeanne Demessieux (1921-1968) |
| Aspects of Light | Brenda Portman (b. 1980) |
| I. Lux solis | |
| II. Lumen Christi | |
| Fiesta | Emma Lou Diemer (1927-2024) |

About the performer

Zach Klobnak is Assistant Professor of Music at Centre College, where he has taught since 2013. He teaches applied lessons in organ, piano, and harpsichord as well as courses in American music and music theory. His duties include accompanying responsibilities for Centre's voice and choral programs.

A native of Iowa, Klobnak holds degrees from Luther College (B.A.), the University of Florida (M.M.), the University of Kentucky (M.A.), and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (D.M.A.), where he held the Brownson Fellowship for organ studies. His principal organ teachers include Dana Robinson, Laura Ellis, and Gregory Peterson; he has also studied harpsichord with Kathryn Reed and choral conducting with Donald Nally, Fred Stoltzfus, and Timothy Peter.

As an active recitalist, Zach has performed throughout the region as soloist and collaborative artist. He especially enjoys designing programs that help expand the core repertoire to include underrepresented composers, including Parisian composer Rolande Falcinelli, who was the subject of his doctoral project. He studied French organ literature and design in Paris and in the Alps region of France. Since 2015, Zach has served as principal keyboardist and accompanist for the Kentucky Bach Choir. He will play the Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony with the Johnson City (TN) Symphony Orchestra in September 2023.

Klobnak is also a seasoned arts administrator. Much of his work in this realm is through the American Guild of Organists, where he currently sits on the Committee for Scholarships. Recently, he helped design and oversee an educational outreach program for young musicians, including a state-of-the-art virtual camp during the Covid-19 pandemic. He has also inaugurated two concert series, one each in Florida and Kentucky, both of which continue to connect audiences to unique musical offerings and are now thriving in their second decade of existence.

Program Notes

In recognition of Women's History Month, this program has been designed to celebrate the work of female composers. It features composers from Germany, Canada, France, and America; music written in the 1800s to the present day, but whose inspiration goes back as far as the 3rd century, in some instances. Enjoy!

Born in Hamburg, Germany, **Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel** was the oldest of four children; along with her well-known brother, Felix, she underwent a rigorous course of musical study. However, because her father was opposed to her education, the thorough training she was receiving was eventually discontinued. He believed women were to remain ornaments to their husbands and families. Ironically, Fanny was regarded by their parents as more talented than Felix, and remained his mentor and model throughout her life. He frequently performed her piano works and even published some of her compositions under his own name. Though Felix valued Fanny's musical insights and opinions, he shared the same views as his father regarding her career. He was generous in his praise of her, but refused to allow the publication of her music or her appearance as a professional pianist. Fanny's *Prelude for Organ* shows her admiration for the works of Bach in its use of the title "Prelude" and in its idiomatic writing for the organ. The various sections contrast melodic elements with wide-spaced chords and a prominent pedal line.

Atlanta based composer, **Sharon J. Willis**, wrote this extended note on her *Exodus* suite:

This organ suite was written as a memorial tribute to the legendary Harriet Tubman, who was born a slave around 1820 at the Brodas Plantation, Tidewater, Maryland. She escaped by way of the Underground Railroad to Philadelphia in 1849. In 1851, after working as a cook and a nurse, she was able to return to Maryland and Virginia to rescue her family and other passengers from slavery. In her words: *Ah nevuuh lost a passenguh an 'ah nevuuh run my train off de track*. The title *Exodus* was taken from the second book of the Old Testament – a book recounting the story of the Hebrews being led from the bondage of slavery out of Egypt to the land of Canaan by their spiritual leader, Moses. Harriet Tubman was dubbed the 'Black Moses' of her people as she led passengers to freedom, never giving any thought to her own safety.

A passacaglia is a musical form that evolved out of the Baroque period. It was a technique by which a theme, written in the bass line, was repeated against harmonic variations in the upper parts. *Chronicles* is a musical attempt to record Tubman's journey of her repeated trips by underground railroad. Historians

accredit Tubman with making nineteen underground trips; thus the passacaglia theme is stated nineteen times in varying ways to represent the number of daring and courageous rescues made by Tubman. She could never depend on going the same way nineteen times without risking a recapture of her passengers. Therefore, in the musical presentation, the passacaglia is contoured by the same dictates. The spirituals exploited in the movement are *Fare Ye Well*; *Wade in de Water*; and *Go Down, Moses*.

There was a deep sense of fellowship among underground passengers who had journeyed to the Promised Land of freedom together. This experience was akin to the ritual of communion. The two spirituals used for thematic material – *Drinking of the Wine* and *Let Us Break Bread Together* – capture the essence of this spiritual communion among the passengers. It also speaks to the relevance of the “invisible church,” a place where slaves gathered to worship, sometimes at the edge of plantation fields at midnight. Now freed, they ate their first meal together.

A juba was a lively duple-meter dance performed by many African Americans during and after slavery. The music for the dance was characterized by playing syncopated rhythms against even rhythms. After the middle passage to freedom was made, celebration was as simple as expressions of gratitude to one’s creator or as complex as shouting and dancing and changing one’s name in preparation for the new life. The juba theme employed in Celebration is based upon the spiritual *I Got a Robe*.

French-Canadian **Rachel Laurin** wrote several volumes titled *Douze Courtes Pièces* (Twelve Short Pieces), the opus 43 being the first, from which I’ve extracted four of the twelve for this program. The sets make use of compositional forms found throughout the organ repertoire, including chorale preludes, fugues, trumpet tunes, sets of variations, and toccatas. The four movements played tonight alternate between soft, reflective moods and more aggressive, celebratory feelings.

The *Répons pour le Temps de Pâques* (Response for the Time of Easter) of **Jeanne Demessieux** is a fantasia for organ based on three Gregorian chants from the Easter mass: *Ite, misse est* (Dismissal), *Victimae paschali laudes* (Sequence), and *Resurrexit* (Introit). The piece was written during the last year of her life and published posthumously in 1970. Improvisatory in nature, the piece has a balanced ABA structure in which Demessieux juxtaposes toccata- and chorale-like writing that treats the chants both individually and in combination. It concludes with a *pianissimo* section of profound tranquility. Demessieux’s use of bitonality throughout makes bold statements reflecting the mystery of the resurrection

celebrated during the time of Easter. I chose to include this piece on my program as a nod to my student days at UF; *Répons* was part of my graduate recital here and in some ways inspired what would become my doctoral research: the life and music of Demessieux's colleague, Rolande Falcinelli.

Commissioned for the dedication of the 2022 Pasi organ at St. George's Episcopal in Arlington, Virginia, *Aspects of Light* by **Brenda Portman** takes inspiration from St. George's Rose Window and Transfiguration Window – both of which were restored at the same time as the new organ installation. Translated “Light of the Sun,” the first movement explores the effect of sunlight shining through windows; the composer writes, “Just as light coming through stained glass produces a kaleidoscope of color, bouncing and reflecting in many directions, the piece opens with the organist's fingers dancing through a kaleidoscope of the tone colors the organ has to offer.” Portman makes use of the *Conditor alme siderum* chant as the basis of the movement, clearly nodding to the “O gracious Light” text often paired with the chant. The second movement, “Light of Christ,” symbolizes the radiant transfiguration of Jesus on the mountaintop – an event celebrated at The Feast of the Transfiguration on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday each year. The historic chant for this day, *Visionem quam vidistis*, is prominently featured: a fugue in the middle, bookended by sections of full-bodied chords.

Throughout her long life, celebrated composer **Emma Lou Diemer's** output spanned nearly 80 years. She wrote for many media, but especially for her own instrument: the organ. Her 2021 memoir, *My Life as a Woman Composer*, is an excellent read and deserves mention at this program honoring female composers. *Fiesta* was composed in 1996 for a concert during the annual Old Spanish Days Fiesta in Santa Barbara, California. The work features a tango dance rhythm, mixed meter, and jazz chords. Suggesting the strum of a guitar, the rhythmic music with unique harmonies creates a joyful and celebratory mood.

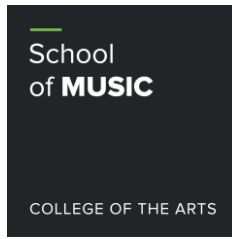
History of the Andrew Anderson Memorial Pipe Organ

A financial gift by Dr. Andrew Anderson, a St. Augustine physician, philanthropist, and associate of early Florida developer Henry Flagler, provided the funds for a pipe organ in the newly constructed University Auditorium. Tonal plans were prepared by William Zeuch of Boston's famous Skinner Organ Company, which built and installed the instrument in early 1925. The organ was first played publicly on June 7th, 1925, at the annual University Commencement Convocation. A musical landmark for its day, the organ was designed and voiced at the zenith of orchestral-imitative or "symphonic" organ design in this country, and is mentioned in such reference works as Orpha Ochse's *The History of the Organ in the United States* and Charles Callahan's *The American Classic Organ*. Claude Murphree, university organist from 1925-1958, performed over 550 concerts on this instrument and his Sunday afternoon recitals became a tradition on campus.

During World War II and immediately after, due to institutional economic conditions, the instrument itself was not given proper care. This University treasure was virtually buried behind layers of heavy velour curtains hung in front of the organ to allow theatrical presentations. When the Division of Music was established in 1948, however, immediate efforts were made to rescue the instrument.

Willis Bodine succeeded Murphree as university organist in 1959 and by the early 1960's the curtains were removed. Under Bodine's leadership, the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company began a program of mechanical renovation and tonal rehabilitation to repair the damage caused by the ravages of time and neglected maintenance. By 1976, renovation and air-conditioning of the building had been completed, but Aeolian-Skinner was no longer in business. In 1992 the M.P. Möller Organ Company continued the careful work of restoring the organ to its former excellence as a teaching and recital instrument.

Laura Ellis joined the UF faculty in 2003 to become the third university organist in the history of the institution. In the fall of 2014, the Reuter Organ Company located in Lawrence, KS, was contracted to provide tonal renovations to the instrument. Twenty-four new ranks of principal pipes were built to revise and enhance the Great, Swell, Positiv and Choir choruses. Reed pipes in all divisions were rebuilt or replaced. Other stops were re-scaled and wind pressures were adjusted. Finally, the entire instrument was re-voiced to achieve a new tonal balance, characterized by abundant fundamental tone and greater clarity. The newly renovated organ was heard for the first time during the *Phantom of the Opera*, presented by the College of the Arts in January 2015.



To ensure an enjoyable concert experience for all, please refrain from talking and entering or exiting while musicians are performing. Food and drink are prohibited in all concert halls. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices. Thank you for your cooperation.

Program 109 in the School of Music Events Series of the 2024-2025 academic year.

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