

HOUGHTON COLLEGE

GREATBATCH SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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Greatbatch School of Music Faculty, Staff, and Administration

presents

Jennifer Ann Ross

Organ

in her

Senior Performance Recital

Jennifer Ann Ross, a student of Dr. Judy Congdon, is performing this recital in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Music degree in Organ Performance.

As a courtesy to the performer and your fellow audience members, please be certain that all cell phones, watch alarms, and pagers are either turned off or set for silent operation. Flash photography can be very disconcerting to performers and is not permitted during the performance. Thanks for your cooperation.

Wesley Chapel

Monday, April 16, 2018

6:30 p.m.

Program

Fantasy and Fugue in G Minor, BWV 542	J. S. Bach (1685-1750)
Benedictus, Op. 59 No. 9	Max Reger (1873-1916)
Organ Sonata in D minor, Op. 65 No. 6 Chorale Tune on <i>Vater Unser</i> Variations I-IV Fugue Finale	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Le Banquet Céleste	Oliver Messiaen (1908-1992)
Toccata in Seven	John Rutter (b. 1945)

John Rutter is one of England's most prominent living composers and conductors whose choral and orchestral works are known around the globe, and he has received many awards for his compositions. The highest award he has achieved is that of the Commander of the British Empire for his service to Queen Elizabeth, as Rutter's works are often commissioned specifically for events of the Royal family. Rutter's works contain elements reminiscent of traditional English composers such as Ralph Vaughn Williams and French composers such as Maurice Duruflé. In Toccata in Seven one can hear these influences throughout and with the seven eight time signature Rutter creates a brilliant energetic rhythmic pattern for his toccata. Rutter creates a contrasting legato section in the middle of this short work, and concludes with energetic material similar to the opening.

Program Notes

second movement. He then concludes the sonata with a quiet lyrical movement in D major.

Le Banquet Céleste, published in 1928, is one of Messiaen's first published organ works. *Le Banquet Céleste* shows the natural ability and understanding that Messiaen had for the organ as if he had been playing and composing for it all his life. Surprisingly, this is not the case as Messiaen did not start playing the organ until his eighteenth birthday. As with most of Messiaen's compositions, *Le Banquet Céleste* is titled and tied to Messiaen's beliefs as a member of the Roman Catholic Church. *Le Banquet Céleste* is focused on Holy Communion and highlights the belief in transubstantiation, that the elements of bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ.

In this piece Messiaen uses the pedal line in *Le Banquet Céleste* to achieve the idea of transubstantiation through a rhythm pattern of steady eighth notes played with even separation, which are intended to imitate water droplets. Messiaen's registration for the rest of the pedal line makes the pedal line sound as if it is the highest part line in the piece, which makes it the focal point. If one focuses enough the eighth notes can have a meditative, hypnotic effect. Messiaen wanted to create an idea of timelessness and transcendence. He wanted to give his listeners a break from everyday life and remind us of how God wants us to live in the present rather than worrying about the past or future as ultimately it is God who is in control.

A typical argument in some of the Bach Preludes and Fugues is whether the two movements put together by editors actually belong as a whole. Sometimes it is clear that they do, and other times it is not so clear. This is the case with Bach's Fantasy and Fugue in G Minor BWV 542 since the fantasy and fugue are two very contrasting pieces.

The fantasy was written in the style of "toccata di ligature et durezza" meaning toccata of suspensions and dissonances. Bach plays with the listeners' expectations for resolution through chromaticism, suspensions, unfinished cadences and the use of consecutive diminished seventh chords. Bach also takes this idea of meeting listener's expectations to a new level by changing key direction as well. Just as the listener expects to hear a resolution to a new key he prolongs the change by going to a different key instead. According to scholar Peter Williams this is one of the most striking features of dissonance used in the Fantasy. The fantasy's form contrasts these chromatically-charged sections of toccata figuration with more sedate contrapuntal passages, concluding with a final passage of "durezza et ligature" material.

The Fugue in G Minor is considered to be a rondo and on a larger scale than some of Bach's other rondo form fugues. When the fugue subject or answer is used it is either played with only one accompanying part, or it is part of four-voice texture. It is believed that the fugue was based on a Dutch tune with a countersubject that was a requirement for a job audition that Bach competed

for in Hamburg at the Jakobikirche, and we know from history that Bach did not get the position. Bach makes the fugue unique in that some of the material pays homage to his friend Johann Reincken who was organist at the Jakobikirche.

Max Reger's father Joseph was a multi-musical instrument player with one of the instruments being the organ, so it made sense for Joseph to put his son into organ lessons to carry out the family tradition of music.

But Reger himself tells us that it was not until he heard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* that he realized his calling was to be a musician. With Reger's first organ teacher Albert Linder he studied works of later 18th-century composers, and Linder noted the influence of Wagner in Reger's highly chromatic organ improvisation. Linder never exposed Reger to the works of Bach, but it was with his second teacher Hugo Riemann that Reger was introduced to the world of Bach, and Bach's organ music was to create the foundations of Reger's organ compositions. Reger tried but could never really escape the forms and structures of Baroque music when he composed. He is known for composing choral-based works, and his larger scale works employ fantasy, passacaglia and fugue structures.

In Reger's *Benedictus* we hear a single-movement piece which with much chromaticism, and whose form hints at the prelude and fugue pairing of the Baroque. The piece relies heavily on the use of the swell box for dynamic shading throughout, and in the fugal section the crescendo pedal is used to gradually bring on nearly every stop of the organ. These mechanical assists for

dynamic shading were relatively new in Reger's time, when the organ began to be conceived and used as a symphonic instrument. Reger concludes the *Benedictus* peacefully by recapitulating the quiet opening material.

The choral tune *Vater Unser* which is based on the Lord's Prayer and first appeared in hymnals in 1529. Bach popularized the *Vater Unser* chorale tune as he created his own harmonization for it in his *St. John's* passion, and continued to use *Vater Unser* in later cantatas and solo organ works. Mendelssohn, who was influenced by Bach, wrote his *Sixth Organ Sonata in D Minor* as a set of theme and variations, using the choral tune *Vater Unser* as the theme.

Mendelssohn creates his own majestic harmonization of the choral tune and uses it for the theme before the variations. The first three variations are simplistic in style as he sets the choral tune with pleasing accompaniment, with the second variation having a unique constant moving pedal line of eighth notes grouped in threes. In the fourth variation, Mendelssohn shows off his virtuosic piano skills; in the first half of the variation he first sets the melody line in the pedal part under a series of fast moving sixteenth notes using registration that makes the notes sparkle, bringing the melody to life. After taking the melody and mixing it in with the sixteenth notes in the second half of the variation Mendelssohn then restates the choral tune with a slight variation of the beginning harmony, which creates a stately and strong finish to the theme and variations. Looking back to Bach, Mendelssohn composes on the chorale tune as the