

PROGRAM NOTES FOR CLAY CHRISTIANSEN'S AGO SUPER SATURDAY RECITAL

BACH: PRELUDE & FUGUE IN B MINOR - One of the five grand and noble organ preludes and fugues Bach composed during his mature Leipzig years, the *Prelude & Fugue in B Minor, BWV 544*, was written ca. 1727. Eminent Bach scholar George Stauffer writes:

Although the structure of both the Prelude and the Fugue continue to show Vivaldian traits (in the use of ritornello and episode sections, for instance), one sees the new influence of vocal idioms in the pliant, expressive, primarily conjunct melodic materials and a tightening of structural elements. In the Prelude, for instance, there are only four ritornello sections, and the episodes are intensely contrapuntal. In the Fugue, the lengthy middle section, for manual alone, is followed by a return to the main subject, now accompanied by a new and powerful descending countersubject.

In the Prelude's episode sections, today played on the organ's bottom Positiv manual, we have a rare example of Bach's phrasing which is indicated in the manuscript in his own handwriting.

MORRICONE: GABRIEL'S OBOE - The Italian composer Ennio Morricone has composed and arranged scores for more than 500 film and television productions. In 2007 he received an Honorary Academy Award "for his magnificent and multifaceted contributions to the art of film music." The sublime *Gabriel's Oboe* from his 1986 movie score for *The Mission* is the most famous part of that score. It is scored for solo oboe with string backing. Some know this music as the theme from that film and others know it by its Italian lyrics written by Chiara Ferrau, "Nella Fantasia" ("In my fantasy"). Today's transcription for organ is by Dr. Christiansen.

FRANCK: CHORAL I IN E MAJOR - One might say of Cèsar Franck's *Trois Chorals* that the first is the most constructive and elaborate, the second the most mystical, and the third the most brilliant. Written during the last year of his life, they are Franck's musical testament and epitomize the spirit of nobility and ethereal calm. No greater organ music was written during the 19th Century.

LANGLAIS: ARABESQUE - Jean Langlais was one of several famous blind French organists. For 42 years he served as Organist Titulaire at the Basilica of Sainte Clotilde in Paris, the same post held earlier by Cèsar Franck. Langlais praised American organs, giving some 300 recitals and many master classes in this country. The elegantly charming little *Arabesque* comes from his collection of twenty-four pieces for harmonium or organ, published by Éditions M. Combre, volume one.

UTTERBACK: DEEP RIVER - Jazz pianist Joe Utterback is an internationally-recognized composer who has created jazz-influenced works for piano, organ, harpsichord, voice, and instrumental combinations, which have won him ASCAP awards annually since 1991. A Kansas native, he holds degrees in piano from Wichita State University and a DMA from the University of Kansas. He teaches at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT, directs the Stratford Sister Cities Chorus and serves as Director of Music and Organist at the First Congregational Church of Stratford, CT.

LISZT: PRELUDE & FUGUE ON THE NAME B-A-C-H - The four-note theme B-A-C-H (B-flat, A, C, B-natural) provides the sole thematic material for the second of Liszt's three large works for organ, the *Prelude & Fugue on the Name of B-A-C-H*. The four-note motif is heard immediately as the pedals begin a brilliant opening section in which the theme is treated in a number of ingenious ways. The *Fugue* begins *misterioso* with a passage of sliding chromaticism in which tonality is suspended for a while. The work is really a kaleidoscopic fantasia and not strictly a prelude and fugue. It was composed for the inauguration of the Merseburg Cathedral in 1855.