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Grace Cathedral 1100 California St. San Francisco, CA 94108

ORGAN RECITAL SERIES 2021

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PROGRAM

Variations on “Cheerful” (Southern Harmony, 1854) (2020) – David Hatt (b. 1954)

Volume One: I. (*quiet theme, serial chords, power duo, deep solo*)
II. (*simple theme, light trio, variation on five notes*)
III. (*two theme variations, frenetic verse, deep canon at the 2nd below, coda*)

Volume Two: Introduction and Aria
Canon Prelude
Retrograde Inversion of Canon Prelude
Variation on Phrase 2
Meditation
Toccata

From Twelve Preludes and Fugues (1946) – Jan Koetsier (1911 – 2006)

V. in A-flat
IV. in F-sharp
VIII. in E-flat

Toccata and Fugue in E minor, Op. 63, No. 9-10 – Max Reger (1873 – 1916)

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PROGRAM NOTES

First, I would like to offer many thanks to the Chapter, Clergy and staff of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco for sponsoring today's concert. The continuing support for the arts is just another reason the cathedral holds a special place in the minds of Bay Area residents. And I'm also thankful to be able to play the first public recital here since the COVID-19 crisis.

Next, a few words are necessary in place of oral program notes. In considering form in large-scale organ works, variation techniques are a favorite tool of the organ composer, but things become more interesting when the theme disappears or is otherwise altered into unrecognizability. A good example is seen in Reger's Op. 73 Variations. The composition of sets of variations which adhere to a stricter approach has been historically significant, but like another less interesting (in the opinion of some) aspect of recent organ music, the motoric repetitive motif structure (as heard in many favorite Toccatas and innumerable contemporary works), these styles seem to be less successful with longer durations.

Another tool of large-scale structure is the collection of similar or related works in groups of 12 pieces. The Dutch neoclassicist Jan Koetsier composed 12 of these Preludes and Fugues in all the major keys in 1946. The final fugue contains all 12 fugue subjects together on the last page.

Reger also wrote 12 selections for the Op. 63 Monologues (from which we hear 9 and 10 today). This work also includes the absurdly beautiful Introduction and Passacaglia in f minor, 5/6. I chose 9 and 10 because they are less well-known but every bit as exceptional. The double fugue #10 ranks as one of his best, and it offers an opportunity to hear (again) the Tuba Major.

The path taken for today's concert also includes Variations on the hymn-tune "Cheerful" (Southern Harmony, 1854) in a style which could be called "West Coast harmonic minimalism," and whose proponents and major influencers include Harold Budd, Barney Childs, Rick Cox, Michael Jon Fink, Jim Fox, Daniel Lentz and Chas Smith. This is not the repetitive minimalism of Riley and Adams; rather it is influenced by the music of New York minimalists Morton Feldman, Earle Brown and Christian Wolff. The single-verse tune has the form ABCB and is treated 11 times over two volumes; there are 18 variations in all. Volume I is in three movements, each with several sections as listed. The first few pages are played on special stops that, although not completely unique to Grace, are still quite rare (especially when one finds them so exquisitely voiced): the Flauto Dolce and Lieblich Gedeckt are so quiet when the box is closed that they are practically inaudible. Four pages in, a serial element is introduced in the form of a 12-note two-chord progression. This is developed and then played backwards. Near the end of Vol. I, a canon at the lowered 2nd uses double pedal lines and leads to an open-ended 11-chord improv which concludes the Volume.

Vol. II has six sections. The serial chords from Vol. I are turned into a linear row, which is followed by the expansive Aria, with wide melodic leaps and long-duration left-hand chords. The Variation on Phrase 2 might be called ethereal, but its lethargy brings an objection from the Gallery organ, as if to say, "Get on with it!" The Toccata is a stylistic departure toward Duruflé and Reger. The initial measures suggest the influence of the "perpetual-motion" style noted above, but then it becomes undisciplined. The Pedal takes over with blatant Trumpets, followed shortly by pianissimo bitonality. The struggle is on and finally it arrives at a giant cadence on D minor/G-flat to D-flat. The theme in B-flat follows in long note-values in the Pedal, while the manuals are engaged in a split-style configuration, pitting arpeggiated triplets against alternating asymmetric "Mulet" chords. The Gallery again objects to this treatment, but no matter, the last phrase is stretched far beyond reason, with the ending fortissimo placing the glorious Tuba Major against the remainder of almost full organ.

ABOUT THE RECITALIST



David Hatt has been Assistant Cathedral Organist at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption in San Francisco since 1998. During the first half of 2017 he also served as Interim Organist at Grace Cathedral. He earned the M.A. degree in Music in 1978 from U. C. Riverside, following organ study with Raymond Boese and composition study with Barney Childs at the University of Redlands. During this time he was also a member of the Redlands Improvisers Orchestra and worked for the Raymond Garner Co. rebuilding tracker organs. The influence of Childs led to performances at regional and national conventions of the Society of Composers, Inc. and the College Music Society. His interest in the music of Max Reger has led him to organize several festivals, including the 2008 Festival which featured the first West-coast appearances of Isabelle Demers. He has been featured in the opera "I, Norton", by Gino Robair, about a famous San Francisco historical character. Dave has also appeared several times with the San Francisco Symphony, SF Girls Chorus, WomenSing and the SF Lyric Chorus. His compositions and arrangements have been published by Wayne Leupold Editions, Darcey Press and Augsburg Fortress. Dave has given well over 100 concerts at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco and over 50 concerts at Trinity Cathedral in Reno.

THE CATHEDRAL ORGAN

No other single musical instrument has the power, the near-orchestral range, and the sonic variety of a great organ. Grace Cathedral's 7,466-pipe Aeolian-Skinner instrument, the Charles B. Alexander Memorial Organ (1934), is one of the first and finest American classic style organs, and is among the largest church organs in the West. Although listed as Opus 910A of Ernest M. Skinner, America's greatest organ designer of the early 1900s, the Alexander organ was largely designed by English-man G. Donald Harrison (1889-1956). One of Aeolian-Skinner's first major organs in the West, it was one of the earliest and finest examples of what Harrison dubbed the "American classic organ". Balancing Baroque and orchestral sounds by using a broad mix of pipes and stops, the American classic organ could accommodate the eclectic repertoire of church music that developed in the early 20th century, while also expressing the brighter and more crisp sounds of earlier styles.

When built, the organ had five divisions: Choir, Great, Swell, Solo and Pedal, and 6,077 pipes, and a 20-horsepower blower in the crypt of the Cathedral. Thanks to the sustained interest and generosity of Harrison and his successor Joseph S. Whiteford, additions and minor tonal alterations were made in 1952 and 1956, raising the total to 7,286 pipes. Swain & Kates made further alterations ca. 1959. Display pipes in the lower screen openings were removed in 1962. Two new divisions by Casavant Frères of Ste.-Hyacinthe, Quebec, were installed in 1974: one in the rear gallery and the other (the now-silent Bombarde) in the apse. A high-pressure Tuba Major was added by the venerable local firm Schoenstein and Co. in 2000, making the current pipe total 7,466. The console, too, went through several incarnations. In 1968 the original console was replaced by Fratelli Ruffatti of Padua, Italy. The console was mobilized in 1984, so that it could be rolled onto the choir floor and turned to any position for concerts. An electrical "umbilical cord" links it to the organ's mechanism. Edward M. Stout, Bay Area organ curator emeritus, now retired, worked with often-limited resources to restore and repair the great organ during his 42-year tenure. In 1998 Schoenstein created a new console with digital memory and combination action. Today, the organ is the fifth-largest in California (by manuals and ranks) and the fiftieth-largest in the world.

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A sincere thank you to all whose gifts of time, talent and treasure support the music program at Grace Cathedral. We especially wish to recognize the following for their generous gifts of \$25 and above designated to organ restoration and the organ recital series since July 1, 2019. Please consider joining our supporters with a tax-deductible donation so that we may continue to offer glorious music in this glorious space.

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