

**Brigham Young University**  
**Opening Faculty Recital Program Notes**  
*October 26, 2024, 7:30 PM – Music Building Concert Hall*

Don Cook and Neil Harmon, organists

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Don Cook

**Sonata Eroica No. 2, Op. 151**

**I. Allegro moderato, “Rheims”**

While the name of Anglo-Irish composer **Charles Villiers Stanford** may not immediately stand out as much as other composers, the names of many of his students do. Among his pupils were Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Stanford represents a retaining of traditional musical tradition in the styles of Mendelssohn, Schumann, and especially Brahms, while actively avoiding ‘modern’ musical styles as Stanford called them. He was especially bothered by Ravel, Debussy, and Stravinsky. Critics often regard Stanford, with Hubert Parry and Alexander Mackenzie as being responsible for a renaissance in English music, despite Stanford’s Irish heritage. The bulk of Stanford’s well-known compositions are his choral works composed in the styles of the Anglican tradition. He also wrote opera, symphonies, string quartets, art songs, and of course, organ works.

Stanford wrote several organ sonatas, his second being titled *Sonata Eroica*. This sonata was written in 1917 soon after the conclusion of the Great War. Stanford dedicates this sonata to the French composer Charles-Marie Widor and “the great country to which he belongs” as a tribute to the tragedies France faced throughout the conflict. The first movement of the sonata is titled *Rheims* as a tribute to the French city of the same name that was bombarded over the course of the war. The great cathedral of the city was damaged in a bombardment in 1914 and gained international attention as Allied forces presented images of its damage as anti-German propaganda. Stanford’s piece begins with a dramatic unison statement of the “alleluias” from the popular Easter chant, *O filii et filiae*. This chant tune is especially popular in France, and by utilizing both an Easter chant, and specifically the “alleluia” refrain, represents France’s eventual victory over the hardships of the war.

The piece opens with a dramatic statement of the “alleluias” of the chant, followed by a thick flourish. The piece alternates in a similar fashion with intermittent statements of the “alleluia” and material in various textures built upon that theme. The piece closes with one final dramatic statement, this time soaring in the soprano voice across moving accompaniment lines, and a fast-moving pedal line. To represent the eventual victory of the battle, the piece concludes triumphantly in G major.

**Manifold Continuation (2004)**

**Neil Thornock** is a familiar name and face on the Brigham Young University campus where he serves as a Professor of Composition. In addition to his current employment, Thornock received a bachelor’s degree in organ from BYU where he studied with Don Cook and Doug Bush.

*Manifold Continuation* received its name from Wallace Stevens's poem "The Place of the Solitaires." As shared by the composer, "Although on the surface, the poem is about birds on a beach, the real subject matter is motion. Stevens captures the abstract quality of motion in the text itself. I attempted to do the same in a musical sense. Thus, the music is about motion – motion within a section, motion from one section to the next, and the overall motion from the beginning of the work to the end." Registration for the piece is to be heavily rooted in the 8' pitch, and many of the registrations marked by dynamics with many of the specifics being left to the performer and their sensibilities. This piece was written for the performer, Don Cook.

#### **Prelude, Adagio, and Choral Variations on "Veni Creator," Op. 4**

20<sup>th</sup> Century French composer **Maurice Duruflé**, had an abrupt and early start into the world of music. At the age of ten his parents delivered him to the Rouen Cathedral Choir School and left him to study there. This early and immersive start into the world of plainchant and liturgical music left a substantial impact on Duruflé. Duruflé's *Prélude, adagio et choral varié sur le "Veni creator"* was written in 1930 based on the chant sequence used for the feast day of Pentecost the celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit to Christ's apostles. The piece is written in three sections, a *Prélude*, an *Adagio*, and a set of choral variations on the chant melody, *Veni creator spiritus*.

The piece was written as a submission to a composition competition that required the submission of a piece in three movements. Experts speculate that Duruflé took pre-existing material written as a standalone set of variations and added the *Prélude* and *Adagio* with hints of the *Veni creator* chant.

The *Prélude* opens with a running triplet pattern that seems to imitate both the Biblical account of the day of Pentecost with the rushing of wind, and the familiar impressionist movement happening in Paris. During the *Prélude* the chant theme is never clearly stated, but small fragments weave their way through the wistful texture. These fragments highlight a variety of colors from the organ, beginning with the delicate flutes, the more blossoming and robust Flûte Harmonique, and the light hautbois (oboe). A brief recitative-esque passage on provides a transition into the *Adagio*. The *Adagio* begins with a simple four-part harmony on the strings of the organ. The beginning of this section alternates between strings and flutes, as more colorful voices get added later. One of the additions is the nasal voix humaine that tries to imitate the human voice. The registration returns to strings before a dramatic crescendo with fast moving ascending passages that almost dance as tongues of fire. The climax of the crescendo are two dramatic D-flat major chords with an added major seventh that slowly resolves to the tonic. The dramatic statement is followed by a fast moving and fiery descent and decrescendo reminiscent of the earlier interlude-like section. This leads into the *Choral varié*, where we hear the chant theme in its entirety for the first time. In the first variation the theme can be found in the pedal line being played by the cromorne, with contrasting flute voices providing an accompaniment. The second variation utilizes more light flute colors that dance around the theme being played in longer note values above triplets in the right hand, and quarter notes in the left hand creating a dizzying polyrhythmic effect. For the third variation, the theme can be found in both the manual parts and in the pedal part in imitation with one another. The final variation is a toccata, with the theme of the chant sneaking into the fast-moving toccata pattern in the left hand, before making a similar appearance in the right hand above the texture, which is then closely followed by the theme in the pedal. The various voices continue to pass the theme around until the full resources

of the organ are engaged and used in one final statement of the theme as the piece closes as the original chant does traditionally, on the dominant.

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Don Cook and Neil Harmon

**Vocalise, Op. 34, No. 14**

*Vocalise* was written by the famed pianist **Sergei Rachmaninoff** for piano and solo voice and published in 1915. The vocal part was to be sung using only one vowel of the singer's choosing, hence the title *Vocalise* or "vocal warm-up." There have been transcriptions of the work created since the original publication including arrangements for orchestra, piano and orchestra, soloist and orchestra, and many more.

This organ transcription was written by Robert Cundick, a former organist of the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square. The arrangement is written for four-hand organ, a voicing that had been gradually becoming more popular in accompaniments for the Tabernacle Choir while Cundick was serving as organist. While the Choir was on tour there were often that two of the organists would play accompaniments at the piano to provide a fuller sound to accompany the large choir. From there, adaptations were made to accompaniments to be played with four-hands at the organ, a practice that continues today as the organ often supplies orchestral transcriptions and reductions as accompaniment for the Choir.

The arrangement appears on the *Tabernacle Organ Duo Extravaganza* CD played by Robert Cundick and fellow Tabernacle organist John Longhurst. The CD was published in 1991 and featured the new renovations on the Tabernacle organ recently completed by Schoenstein & Co.

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Neil Harmon

**Intrada (1977)**

The King's Singers have a surprising number of organ composers that have come from their ranks. While that number may only be two, it is still surprising. **Bill "Grayston" Ives** was a member of this notable English ensemble from 1978 to 1985. His early musical training came from Selwyn College in Cambridge, where he held a choral scholarship. Much of Ives' compositional output is written for choir, specifically written for the liturgy during his time as organist and choir director at Magdalen College in Oxford. Outside of his liturgical and service music, he has written several arrangements of spirituals, some folk songs, and a handful of secular choral pieces. His organ output consists of four pieces, the *Intrada* being the first in the collection when it was published.

The *Intrada* was written for Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee Thanksgiving service, held in St. Paul's Cathedral in 1977. The piece contains an oft-repeated fanfare figure. Beyond the melodic and harmonic similarities to each entry of this theme, the use of dotted eighth notes followed by sixteenth notes can be found in abundance. A brief "B" section visits some other key centers before returning to the original E-flat major, triumphantly restating the original fanfare

material, this time utilizing the full resources of the organ. A brief coda sees the rhythmic pattern mentioned before moving to the pedals for a conclusion on full organ.

### **Cloister-Garth**

Sir **A. Herbert Brewer** was an organist and composer active in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Like most English composers of church music at the time, most of his published works are for organ or choir (written to be used in an Anglican church service). Brewer's delicate piece *Cloister Garth* is named after two pieces of architecture in medieval monasteries. The cloister was a covered area that connected the main buildings of the monastery complex. At the center of these cloisters was a garden area called a garth. The garth was divided into four sections, representative of either the four gospels, the four evangelists, or other parts of the liturgy. These sections were created by using the shape of the cross. At the intersection point between two lines of the cross was a central water feature, either a fountain or a well, that was to symbolize paradise. This area was especially important to those that rarely left the monastery, giving a place for contemplation and prayer.

Brewer's *Cloister-Garth* is written to represent a walk through one of these gardens. It's light texture and occasional ornaments lead the listener through a garden like these on a bright sunny day. Throughout the piece various solo colors of the organ are utilized, providing not only a walk through the metaphorical garden, but a walk through some of the color voices of the organ as well. The variety of these solo voices of the organ became standard in English organ construction, and frequently drawn upon by composers.

### **Prelude and Fugue in B Minor, BWV 544**

The name **Johann Sebastian Bach** and the organ as an instrument are almost synonymous. Building on the influences of composers before him, Bach harnessed a variety of styles and developed contrapuntal techniques to their peak at the end of the baroque era. Bach's organ compositions can be divided into several eras, with the Prelude and Fugue in B minor, BWV 544 coming from the latter part of his career while working in Leipzig. This Prelude and Fugue is one of several compositions that shows a fully developed, contrapuntally complex Bach at work. It is well known that Bach would often utilize his preludes/toccatas and fugues separated as preludes and postludes for church services. Beyond their liturgical function, they provided the key center for the choir at the church so they could begin the service. It is rumored that this piece was first performed in this fashion at St. Paul's Church in Leipzig at a memorial service for Christiane Eberhardine der Stake, who was the electress of Saxony and the Queen of Poland.

The prelude consists of intricate rhythmic lines of 32<sup>nd</sup> notes imitated across all voices, including in the pedal. In addition to these lines are abnormal pedal octaves that help create a sense of repetitive gravitas and drama as part of these contrapuntal lines. After this original material has been introduced, a lighter idea is introduced in the manual parts. Through the rest of the prelude these two ideas continue to battle, with the more solemn and dramatic first material "winning" in the end.

After the intricate rhythms of the prelude the listener may be surprised to hear a simple stepwise fugue subject in common time. On paper, this may make it seem like a loss of energy by comparison to the earlier excitement in the prelude, but this almost never ending and steady drive of a fugue subject provides an intense march forward. During the introduction of the fugue subject, a countersubject is introduced. Interestingly, this countersubject is heard more often in

the rest of the piece than the original fugue subject. As the piece progresses brief music box-like episodic passages are heard while shifting tonal centers. Finally, the subject is dramatically re-introduced in B minor, and the piece ends with the expected Picardy third in B major.

### **Ciacona in D Major**

General audiences may be surprised to learn that 17<sup>th</sup> century German composer, **Johann Pachelbel** wrote more than just the *Canon in D*. In fact, his output of works is expansive for the time and many of his pieces are written for organ. Pachelbel stands firmly in the middle of the Baroque-era, and helped develop the South German tradition of composition. Pachelbel experimented with a variety of genres and ensembles and influenced a variety of composers from other countries and styles as well.

The “chaconne” is like a “passacaglia” but instead of material being played over a repeating ground bass line, the repetition comes from a repeating harmony (which in turn ends up creating a repeating bassline.) Pachelbel’s Chaconne in D Major follows the practice of introducing a short theme. Many variations follow this initial introduction, with changes in texture, rhythmic patterns, and overall complexity. The form of this piece lends itself well to an exploration into the various colors of the organ to support the changes from one variation to the next.

### **Retrospection**

In a letter written in 1943 to a famous composer at the time, **Florence Price** wrote, “To begin with I have two handicaps – those of sex and race. I am a woman; and I have some Negro blood in my veins ... I should like to be judged on merit alone.” Price was a Black woman, born in the American South during the beginnings of the Jim Crow laws. Seemingly set up for failure based on the racial and gender prejudice of the time, she overcame challenges and became the first Black woman to be recognized as a symphonic composer and the first to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra. After high school she attended the New England Conservatory of Music, where she received a double major in both piano and organ. Some of her organ compositions harken back to earlier works by composers like Bach and Guilmant, which she has been credited with performing. Despite the success during her life, Price’s music left the public eye after her death in 1953. In 2009 a large collection of her works was found in her abandoned summer home, and in the late 2010’s a renaissance of her music began. One of the leaders in this renaissance of her music was the world of the organ.

Price’s *Retrospection* (which was formerly titled *An Elf on a Moonbeam*, was one of several works never published during her lifetime. Price was a master of combining folk influences with traditional styles. In one moment, audiences follow her through the traditions of the concert hall, and then, in an instant they are transported to a street in New Orleans, walking by jazz clubs. *Retrospection* contains both influences. In the A-section, a rocking accompaniment figure with a soaring pentatonic melody show a connection to Price’s Black heritage, as this scale appeared often in the melodies of Spirituals. In the B-section of the piece, more of Price’s roots can be heard with her tasteful use of jazz harmonies, and ascending arpeggios that sound like an elf trotting along a moonbeam. The original thematic material appears again, and in a brief coda the jazz harmonies return, while the melodic line ascends to the piece’s light closure.

## Sortie

Despite being born into the traditions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries of France, **Guy Ropartz** self-identified his compositional style as being a Celtic Breton. Despite this self-appointed label, Ropartz's style is more reflective of the styles of Claude Debussy and César Franck. The compositional output of Ropartz is especially diverse, with choral music, orchestral works including symphonies, organ works, piano works, and chamber music. Ropartz even dabbled in works for stage by writing three operas. He was also involved in the posthumous publication of the opera of a friend who had died in World War I by transcribing the score from memory after the original was destroyed in a fire. Ropartz's organ instructors include Theodore Dubois, and César Franck, whom he studied with during his time at the Paris Conservatory. The majority of his organ works were published early in his compositional career, between the ages of 30-55.

Ropartz's *Sortie* comes from a publication of six pieces published in 1896. All but the *Sortie* from this collection are primarily introspective. The *Sortie* (the organ postlude or recessional piece of the Mass) is a sprightly, fast moving, and regal piece written as a triumphal postlude. It was written for the symphonic organ built by Cavallé-Coll at the Cathedral of St. Brieuc and is dedicated to the Cathedral's organist. The influence of César Franck's *Choral in A minor* can be seen in the form of the *Sortie*, with passages of full organ material interspersed with lighter statements in more of a chorale texture. A much lighter "B" section of the piece focuses on syncopated thematic material, and shifts quickly through several key centers before returning to the original B-flat major. Additional influences of Franck can be seen in the rocking pedal line alternating between the tonic and the fifth, almost as if it was imitating a timpani. This was a technique used by Franck in his *Piece Heroique*, a substantial step in the development of the symphonic approach to organ registration. This figure can be found at the end of the "A" sections of the *Sortie*, and during the coda before resolutely closing on a B-flat major chord.

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*Program notes written by Connor Larsen, a graduate student in organ at BYU*