

RAY CORNILS, *Municipal Organist*
Kotzschmar Festival Brass

Friends of the Kotzschmar Organ

Tuesday, August 23, 2016 • 7:30 pm • Merrill Auditorium • Portland, Maine

Notes on the Program by Nathan A. Randall

ORGAN POWERHOUSES

The Secular Organ and Its Music

Most of us associate the pipe organ with ecclesiastical settings. But during the century between about 1850 and 1950, organs were increasingly found in secular locations such as concert halls, civic centers, or fraternal lodges, among others. This was especially true in England, where cities and towns made wealthy by the Industrial Revolution vied with each other to build the biggest, the best, (the loudest?) organs in their town hall concert venues.

During the early years of the 20th century, many American cities and towns followed suit, including Portland, Maine. The Kotzschmar Memorial Organ you hear this evening was first heard on August 22, 1912 during the dedication of Portland's New City Hall, replacing the building destroyed by fire in 1908.

The Austin Organ, one of the largest in America at the time, was the gift of Portland native Cyrus H.K. Curtis who had made his fortune as publisher of magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies Home Journal*. The gift honored Hermann Kotzschmar, Portland's leading musical figure for several generations, a close friend of the Curtis family, and Cyrus Curtis's namesake.

The proliferation of organs in secular settings led to new genres of organ music not related to the requirements of religious worship, but partaking of the larger world of secular music. This evening's program is largely drawn from that repertory.

Strauss: *Sunrise, from Also Sprach Zarathustra*

Before turning to opera, Richard Strauss composed a number of descriptive works for orchestra that he called tone poems. In them, he mastered his craft as a composer as he explored and expanded the boundaries of Wagnerian harmony and orchestration. In 1896, Strauss based one of his tone poems on Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical novel, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Though Strauss's other tone poems were immensely popular, the abstract intellectual subject of *Zarathustra* led it to be largely overlooked and rarely performed.

The work's first 21 measures gained a new lease on life in 1968, when American film director Stanley Kubrick used the music as the opening segment of his futurist film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Since then, the entire tone poem has increasingly been programmed by major orchestras. The sub-title "Sunrise" doesn't appear in the orchestral score, though Strauss used the designation in a program note he prepared for the first performance in Frankfurt. Originally scored for orchestral brass, percussion, and large pipe organ, the excerpt lends itself particularly well to transcription.

Bonnet: *Variations de concert, Opus 1*

Born in Bordeaux in 1884, Bonnet began organ studies with his father, and held his first church position at the age of 14. Shortly thereafter, he studied with Alexandre Guilmant at the Paris Conservatoire, and in 1906 was appointed *titulaire* at Saint-Eustache, Paris. Bonnet enjoyed particular popularity in America. In 1917, he began a two-year tour of the United States, playing more than 100 recitals throughout the country. From 1921 to 1923, he was influential (along with Harold Gleason) in founding the organ department at the new Eastman School of Music. Between 1917 and 1940, Bonnet edited six volumes entitled *Historical Organ Recitals* (published by G. Schirmer), one of the very first publications to make "early organ music" of the 16th and 17th centuries generally available.

He returned to Paris where he continued to perform and teach. In 1940, Bonnet was forced by World War II to return to the United States, serving as organist at the Worcester (Massachusetts) Art Museum. On October 1st of that year, his extensive American tour included a recital on the Kotzschmar Organ. Joseph Bonnet died in 1944, while on vacation in Quebec Province.

The *Concert Variations*, Opus 1, dates from the year Bonnet was appointed at Saint-Eustache, although it is clearly a secular work intended for Bonnet's recital appearances. A bravura *fortissimo* introduction precedes Bonnet's original chordal sixteen-measure theme. *Variation I* adds a staccato pedal figuration to the theme, still present in the manuals. *Variation II* sends the theme itself down to the pedals, now accompanied by triplets for the manuals. *Variation III* begins as though it might be a fugue, but the entry of the theme on a powerful reed stop reveals contrapuntal sleight-of-hand. *Variation IV* brings the set to its "powerhouse" conclusion: the theme is heard in massive *fortissimo* chords over a double-octave pedal. A brilliant *Coda* (virtually a fifth variation) recalls the bravura introduction over statements of the theme in the pedals.

DeLamarter: *You Raise the Flute to Your Lips*

The dictionary tells us that an *eclogue* is "a Classical poem in which shepherds converse," and that is precisely what Eric DeLamarter has provided. Over a gentle pastoral background, florid solos for the flute alternate with solos for reed stops, suggesting two shepherds playing a syrinx (panpipe) and aulos (reed-pipe).

Eric DeLamarter was born in Lansing, Michigan in 1880, and attended Albion College in Albion, Michigan. In Chicago, he studied organ with Wilhelm Middelschulte (probably best known as the teacher of Virgil Fox), and during 1901-02 with Guilman and Widor in Paris. DeLamarter was assistant conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1918 to 1933, and associate conductor from 1933 to 1936. His compositions include four symphonies, two organ concertos, a number of concert overtures, and many shorter organ works.

Bach: *My Spirit Be Joyful* from Cantata 146

Johann Sebastian Bach spent the last 27 years of his life as Cantor of the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, the most prestigious musical position in Protestant Germany. Among many other duties, Bach was responsible for providing a cantata for every Sunday. We do not know how many he actually wrote (many are thought to be lost), but at least 209 survive. And although the term *cantata* specifically refers to music that is *sung*, Bach refashioned many of his earlier instrumental works into arias, duets, and even choruses. (Given the workload, that's hardly surprising.) The process also went the other way: Bach himself arranged movements from the cantatas for other forces; the so-called "Schübler" Chorales for organ are well-known examples.

So it seems appropriate that arrangers have taken delight in reversing the process: recasting Bach's vocal music for any number of instrumental combinations. *My Spirit Be Joyful* is the seventh movement of Cantata 146, for the fourth Sunday after Easter (Jubilate Sunday). Originally a duet for tenor and bass soloists accompanied by oboes, strings, and continuo, it is heard this evening in an arrangement for brass and organ by the late Rolf Smedvig, former principal trumpet of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and founder of the Empire Brass.

Franck: *Pièce heroïque*

For the Paris Universal Exposition of 1878, Aristide Cavaillé-Coll built the first large organ ever installed in a French concert hall: the *Salle des Fêtes* ("Festival Hall") of the *Palais du Trocadéro* built especially for the Exposition. It was, in effect, a "municipal organ," like the Kotzschmar. The greatest organists of France participated in a series of recitals to welcome the new instrument: Alexandre Guilman, Eugène Gigout, Théodore Dubois, Charles-Marie Widor, Camille Saint-Saëns, and André Messager.

On October 1, César Franck gave the first performance the *Pièce heroïque* (*Heroic Piece*), one of his *Trois Pièces* expressly composed for the occasion. (Oddly, he never performed it again, though it was published in 1883.) Franck offered no explanation for the title, nor a program for the music (though many

have been suggested by imaginative writers). In fact, the music requires neither: it is “heroic” in its own terms, a bold essay in the symphonic style Franck had first explored in his *Grand pièce symphonique* (1862). Moreover, it was composed to display the “heroic” new Cavaillé-Coll organ.

Structurally, the *Pièce héroïque* exploits the contrast between the minor and major modes of the key of B. The brooding opening in B *minor* is built on an upward-yearning motive in the left hand, accompanied by the “chugging” eighth-notes in the right. This motive is thoroughly developed by transformational means often associated with Liszt; the brooding opening returns from time to time in its original form.

The forward motion comes to a halt on the dominant (F# major): a passage for pedals reminiscent of tympani introduces the more lyrical section in B *major*. The “tympani” motive interrupts from time to time, eventually becoming an ostinato under evanescent modulations. A brief “recitative” based on the upward-yearning motive signals the return of the opening section, now elaborated, and once again in the *minor* mode. The yearning motive is finally heard in the pedal; a great crescendo to full organ leads to “heroic” statement of the lyrical material in B *major*. The work concludes *fortissimo* in the major mode with a reappearance of the “tympani” in the pedal, this time heard on the powerful 32’ reed stops.

Dupré: Prelude and Fugue in B Major

Marcel Dupré was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire when (between about 1911 and 1914) he wrote the *Trois Préludes et fugues*. They are of such virtuosic difficulty that his teacher Charles-Marie Widor pronounced them “unplayable,” and only Dupré himself performed them for several years. On publication as Opus 7 in 1920, Dupré dedicated the B-Minor work to the memory of René Vierne (younger brother of Louis Vierne) who had been killed by shrapnel in May, 1918.

The *Prélude* is for all intents and purposes a toccata built from rapidly alternating chords in sixteenth-notes over a slower pedal theme. Forward motion is provided by Dupré’s colorful kaleidoscopic harmonies; contrast is provided by manual changes.

The *Fugue* begins with a quirky subject (also in sixteenth-notes) only three bars long. After the first entry of all four voices (A-T-B-S), Dupré alternates a number of episodes in several keys with middle entries of the subject. As the music progresses, the fugue gradually takes on more toccata-like figurations. The final set of entries in B major presents the subject in two speeds simultaneously: the original sixteenth notes and in augmentation in eighth-notes. This is but one early example of Dupré’s absolute mastery of counterpoint that (among other things) enabled him to improvise five-voice fugues on submitted themes!

Marcel Dupré was the 20th century’s most influential recitalist, teacher, and composer of organ music. A child prodigy, he first studied with his father, then with Guilmant, Vierne, and Widor at the Paris Conservatoire. As a composer, he won the Prix de Rome in 1914. In 1920, Dupré performed the complete organ works of J.S. Bach from memory in ten concerts at the Conservatoire, giving a repeat performance the following year at the Palais du Trocadéro. In 1921-22, Dupré became famous throughout America during a six-month concert tour (the first of several lengthy annual tours) organized by Alexander Russell of Wanamaker’s Concert Bureau. In 1926 he was appointed Professor of Organ and Improvisation at the Paris Conservatoire; he was the teacher of two generations of the foremost organists of France and the United States. In 1934, he succeeded Widor as *titulaire* of the Parisian church of Saint Sulpice, where (until his death in 1971) he presided over the large 5-manual instrument generally conceded to be Cavaillé-Coll’s masterpiece.

Pavane Medley

Antiquarianism was an important aesthetic feature of the Romantic Era, whether in music, literature, or the plastic arts. Thus, many Romantic composers reinterpreted Renaissance dances as the basis for new compositions. The *pavane* originated in the 16th century as a slow dance in duple meter that served as a processional to bring the dancers onto the dance floor.

In 1887, Gabriel Fauré composed this *Pavane* for chorus with piano accompaniment, and shortly thereafter recast the music for small orchestra with optional chorus.

In 1899, while still Fauré's student at the Paris Conservatoire, Maurice Ravel composed the *Pavane for a Dead Princess* for solo piano. When a friend asked about the unusual title, Ravel laughingly admitted that it implied nothing about the music; he had simply been amused by the sound of the words. The composer orchestrated the *Pavane* for small chamber orchestra in 1910, the version in which it has become universally known.

Langlais: *Scherzo-Cats*

Particularly popular in North America, the blind French organist Jean Langlais played more than 300 recitals here in three extended tours between 1952 and 1959. On the trans-Atlantic voyage home following the last, Langlais began to sketch a multi-movement work with the title *American Suite*.

The humorous fifth movement – *Scherzo-Cats* – is dedicated to the composer's friend, the organist and musicologist Helen Hewitt of the University of North Texas, Denton. More accurately, it is dedicated to her many cats whom she named after organ stops! The playful music is cast in a simple A-B-A form.

Rawsthorne: *Line Dance*

In 1997, Noel Rawsthorne composed a five-movement *Dance Suite* for his friend Gordon Stewart to celebrate the re-opening of the newly restored "Father" Willis organ at Huddersfield Town Hall, Yorkshire, England (like the Kotzschmar, a municipal organ). *Line Dance* is the suite's fifth (and concluding) movement.

Rawsthorne is well known for his sense of humor and his view that "the organ should be fun." So it's not surprising that *Line Dance* is based on music from Michael Flatley's stage show *Riverdance: The Lord of the Dance*, wildly popular worldwide at the time the music was composed. The music opens with the familiar Shaker tune *Simple Gifts* (sometimes known as *The Lord of the Dance*), and presents a series of folk-tunes and -dances. We'll not spoil the surprises by listing them here, but pay attention! They go past quickly. The last tune is *On Ilkley Moor baht at (On Ilkley Moor Without a Hat)* from Yorkshire's West Riding where Huddersfield is located.

From 1955 to 1980, Noel Rawsthorne served as organist at Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's gigantic Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool where he presided over its gigantic Henry Willis III organ, the largest in the United Kingdom. Rawsthorne had previously served as a boy chorister at the Cathedral, and as sub-organist to Reginald Goss-Custard.

Widor: *Salvum fac populum tuum*

Sources disagree about precisely when or why Widor composed this music. The first French performance was given at an Armistice Service held on November 17, 1918 at Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris. The music was certainly appropriate, as its title is drawn from the *Te Deum laudamus* (*We praise Thee, O God ...*), the ancient hymn traditionally heard at services of thanksgiving.

But the printed score carries the date 1916 and the music was performed to raise funds for war relief in London's Queen's Hall in 1917 while World War I still raged. Again, the title *Save Thy People* is appropriate, though the circumstances put a different "spin" on its implications.

A brief introduction for organ alone features the dotted-rhythms from which the composition grows. The trombones enter with a somber march-tune, joined in the repeat by the trumpets and side-drum. A passage for solo organ introduces the march's softer second theme, a solo trumpet offers fanfares, taken up by the entire brass.

In a brief development section, the musical material fragments, leading to a final return of the opening with trombones and side-drum, again joined by the trumpets. The work comes to a conclusion with a brief, brilliant Coda built on the "fanfare" motive.