

The College of Fine Arts
School of Music
Presents

A Senior Recital
Matt Gender, Organ

Saturday, March 16, 2013
University Auditorium
3:00 p.m.

Prelude and Fugue in E flat-Major, BWV 552	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
Cortège et Litanie, op. 19	Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)
Introduction and Passacaglia	Max Reger (1873-1916)
Le jardin suspendu	Jehan Alain (1911-1940)
Symphony No. 1 VI. Finale	Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

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Mr. Gender's recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Music degree in Organ Performance. Mr. Gender is from the organ studio of Dr. Laura Ellis.

PROGRAM NOTES

This **Prelude** and **Fugue** stand as bookends to an important collection of keyboard music composed by **J.S. Bach**, the third book of the **Clavier-Übung**, published in 1739. The collection starts with the prelude, which is composed in ritornello form. Bach includes many interesting features in this piece: French overture rhythms, *stile antico* sections, and contrapuntal sections, all of which return at some point in the piece. The rest of the *Clavier-Übung III* contains twenty-one chorale-based works and four Duettos and is (including the prelude and fugue) arranged as a German Organ Mass, setting parts of the Lutheran catechism and mass parts. The final piece in the collection is the Fugue, which is actually a triple fugue in five voices that has a recurring subject reminiscent of the hymn tune *St. Anne* (which would have been unfamiliar to Bach). The fugues each combine the *St. Anne* subject with their own unique subjects.

The **Cortège et Litanie** is a staple in an experienced student's organ repertory, and has an intriguing history. The piece originally started as improvised music for a play at a production house in Paris where **Marcel Dupré** was employed as an accompanist. The positive feedback about the piece that he received from friends led him to publish it for piano. An impresario, Dr. Alexander Russel, enjoyed the piece so much that he suggested to Dupré that he arrange it for orchestra and solo organ. As a result, there are three different versions of this piece: the original piano version, an organ version, and an arrangement for organ and orchestra. The piece is in two distinct sections: the *Cortège* (a funeral procession) and a *Litany* (a repetitive prayer containing petitions); each section has its own distinct theme that Dupré musically expands by exploring different timbres of the organ in addition to chromatic alterations. At the very end, Dupré combines the two themes, at which point the piece ends with large alternating chords.

There is a particular serious and heavy quality to the organ music of **Max Reger** that is evident in his very progressive harmonies and thick, timbral registrations. This piece opens with a dark, powerful introduction that declares Reger's lustrous harmonic language and the gravity of the d-minor key area. The passacaglia (a piece composed as a continuous variation where an ostinato ground bass pattern repeats in the pedal and the manuals expand upon the pattern) hearkens back to Bach's great Passacaglia in C Minor, as both are composed in triple meter with a lilting

ostinato bass pattern (a half note followed by a quarter); recalling this Baroque compositional principle shows this piece was influenced by the revival of older forms that was occurring during the Romantic period. The ground bass pattern is stated in the very opening measure of the passacaglia, and then Reger expands upon this theme in manual variations that build in intensity, both rhythmically and dynamically. The twelfth and final variation chromatically alters the ground bass pattern; Reger then recalls the theme from the Introduction to close the piece.

Even though **Jehan Alain** (1911-1940) lived a relatively short life (he was killed in the Second World War), he wrote some of the most important and dynamic modern French organ music. Alain studied composition with Paul Dukas and Jean Jules Aimable Roger-Ducasse. His collection of compositions gives a small insight into his genius and writing style, which encompassed many forms and influences (from African and Indian features to Russian styles and Gregorian chant). Written when the composer was just 23 years old, **Le jardin suspendu** is a chaconne, a continuous variation piece similar to the passacaglia that has an ostinato ground bass and harmonic pattern that repeat with variations in the upper voices. The chaconne theme is octatonic (a scale based on alternating whole and half steps) and almost creates a state of reverie or stasis through descending thirds. As the chaconne theme repeats (six times), Alain varies it with register, texture, and innovative registration changes. In Alain's words, "The Suspended Garden is the perpetually pursued and fugitive idea of the artist; it is an inviolable and inaccessible refuge."

Louis Vierne was a nearly blind organist who was Organiste Titulaire at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris from 1900 to 1937. He was able to concertize in America and composed six large-scale symphonies for organ (in addition to many other pieces), each of which show an enormous amount of virtuosity, compositional skill, musical genius, and harmonic experimentation. The **First Symphony** is fairly tame harmonically and its finale is probably one of the most famous of organ literature, because of its accessibility to the organist and the audience alike. The Finale is a textbook French-romantic toccata that starts with a thunderous theme in the pedal accompanied by ringing eighth notes in the manuals. The dynamic level then decreases as the theme is stated in many different key areas. Vierne begins to build tension as a crescendo mounts. The tension is resolved as the theme triumphantly returns, accompanied by a chorus of mixtures now in eighth note triplet-figurations. The piece closes with a fiery pedal scale, and ends on a resounding D-major chord.

Program Notes by Matt Gender