

**All Saints' Episcopal Church
Atlanta, GA**

Monday, October 12, 2015 7:30 PM

Nicholas Capozzoli, organ

Rhapsody for Organ (2014)	Craig Phillips (b. 1961)
Prelude and Fugue in G, BWV 541	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
There is a Happy Land	George Shearing (1919-2011)
Sonata in B-flat, op. 65, no. 4 Allegro con brio Andante religioso Allegretto Allegro maestoso	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Évocation II	Thierry Escaich (b. 1965)
Prélude et Fugue No. 1	Elsa Barraine (1910-1999)
Sonata Eroica, op. 94	Joseph Jongen (1873-1953)

Program Notes

Craig Phillips's "Rhapsody for Organ" was the commissioned work written for the 2015 Taylor Organ Competition, which took place at All Saints' in April. The piece opens with a sprightly carillon and fragmented pedal interjections, but this energy soon gives way to a noble theme (marked "appassionato"). A second theme, presented in a reduced registration, features a dialogue between the manuals and pedal. Throughout this section, Phillips's modal and chromatic language obscures one's sense of key, an ambiguity that mysteriously leads to the middle lyrical section. Antiphonal echoes between the hands and feet exploit the instrument's soft colors. After several measures of quiet celestes, a sudden burst of energy expels the introversion and ushers in a reprise of the opening material. The work concludes with the power of full organ and virtuosic pedal exclamations.

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote the Prelude and Fugue in G, BWV 541 during his years as court organist in Weimar, although it was revised in 1742 when he was Cantor at the St. Thomaskirche in Leipzig. The Prelude is structured like an Italian solo violin concerto, with string-like figuration and harmonic progressions that reflect his study of Antonio Vivaldi and Arcangelo Corelli's music. The buoyant fugue demonstrates Bach's mastery of counterpoint and virtuosic use of the pedal.

Sacred Sounds (1977), a collection of American folk hymn arrangements, was the result of collaborations between the jazz pianist George Shearing and distinguished American organist Dale Wood (1934-2003). “There is a Happy Land” reveals Shearing’s attractive harmonic language and showcases his ability to creatively ornament a tune. Wood’s registration suggestions give the organist a great deal of flexibility to arrange this piece and have fun with the instrument’s jazzy potential!

In 1844, Felix Mendelssohn was commissioned by the English publishers Coventry and Hollier to write a set of organ voluntaries. What started as service pieces turned into a set of six sonatas that demanded an organ with full resources, including a satisfactory pedalboard (Mendelssohn was disappointed that most English organs could not even play the works of Bach because they lacked large, independent pedalboards). The polyphonic first movement of his Sonata No. 4 in B-flat major is reminiscent of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, an influential model in Mendelssohn’s formation. Following a hymn-like reflection and a movement similar to Mendelssohn’s “Songs Without Words,” a concluding march and fugue offer a brilliant close to the sonata.

Thierry Escaich’s second *Évocation* was commissioned by the 1996 Festival de Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges. A repetitive “C” drone dominates the entire piece, above which emerges a rhythmic fragment, a chant-like evocation, and recollections of the 42nd Genevan psalm tune (more popularly known as the tune of the Advent hymn “Comfort, Comfort O My People”). These fragments aggressively combat with each other until rapid pedal interjections take over. After fiery juxtapositions between the organ’s various registers, an insistent, rhythmic march brings the piece to a stirring conclusion.

The composer Elsa Barraine studied at the Paris Conservatory alongside fellow organists Olivier Messiaen and Maurice Duruflé, although her gender and political leanings stunted her works’ popularity. Barraine was active in the Front national des musiciens, an organization of composers and musicians in Nazi occupied France; her involvement in the French Resistance is even more striking due to her Jewish background. Barraine’s first of two preludes and fugues for organ shows the influence of Paul Dukas, her composition teacher and the work’s dedicatee. While the *Prélude* elucidates her distinct compositional voice, its motivic cohesion and sense of color align Barraine with her French contemporaries. A solemn fugue based on Jewish chant displays Barraine’s mastery of counterpoint, and it eventually builds to an exciting climax on full organ. In the span of three measures, this energy dissipates into soft *Récit* foundations that herald the G minor theme in G major. The nostalgic ending evokes the work’s modal past, and it concludes in quiet assurance.

Sonata Eroica is perhaps the Belgian composer Joseph Jongen’s strongest and most popular piece for solo organ. This monumental work was commissioned to inaugurate the new Josef Stevens organ in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. While it was dedicated to Joseph Bonnet, titular organist of St. Eustache in Paris, neither Bonnet nor his church’s instrument seemed to have influenced Jongen’s conception. Following a rousing introduction and tumultuous fanfares, a folk-like tune is presented and becomes the motivic germ for subsequent variations. Jongen’s colorful harmonic language and rhythmic drive create exciting drama, which is further heightened by waves of crescendi and diminuendi. After a dramatic pause, a short fugue based on the theme emerges and eventually grows into a bombastic conclusion.

Notes by Nicholas Capozzoli