

2023–2024

Saturday, May 4, at 5:00

Monica Berney Organ

Dupré from *Symphonie-Passion*, Op. 23:

I. The World Awaiting the Savior

Brahms/arr. Berney from Six Pieces for Piano, Op. 118:

I. Intermezzo in A minor

II. Intermezzo in A major

III. Ballade in G minor

Bach Prelude and Fugue in B minor, BWV 544

Whitlock Fantasie Choral No. 2 in F-sharp minor

Kapustin/arr. Berney from Sinfonietta, Op. 49:

IV. Rondo: Presto

Messiaen from *L'Ascension*:

II. Serene Alleluias of a Soul that Longs for Heaven

III. Outbursts of Joy from a Soul before the Glory of Christ,
Which Is Its Own Glory

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 15 minutes, and will be performed without an intermission.

This concert is part of the Fred J. Cooper Memorial Organ Experience, supported through a generous grant from the **Wyncote Foundation**.

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Photos: Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Photo by Landon Nordeman; violinist Davyd Booth at Tattooed Mom. Photo by Jessica Griffin; Principal Tuba Carol Jantsch at Philadelphia's Magic Gardens. Photo by Neal Santos; Principal Bass Joseph Conyers at Cherry Street Pier. Photo by Kriston Jae Bethel; Principal Harp Elizabeth Hainen on Broad Street. Photo by Neal Santos.

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Soloist

Ted Gorodetzky



Organist **Monica Berney** is known for her technical mastery, effortless musicality, and engaging stage presence. Early in her career she received first prize in numerous competitions, including the 2015 American Guild of Organists (AGO) Regional Competition for Young Organists (Southwest Region), the 2015 Schweitzer Competition (Young Professionals' Division), the 2013 William C. Hall Competition, the 2012 L. Cameron Johnson Competition, and the

2011 Oklahoma City University Competition. At age 22 she was recognized by *Diapason* magazine as one of the top 20 organists under 30.

Ms. Berney has appeared at the Kimmel Center at the Halloween Organ Extravaganza and in concert with The Philadelphia Orchestra. She has also performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, Merrill Auditorium in Portland (Maine), and Spivey Hall in Morrow (Georgia). She has headlined at prominent festivals including New York City AGO's Presidents' Day Conference, the Eccles Festival in Salt Lake City, the Reuter Organ Festival in Albuquerque, and the International Philip Lorenz Keyboard Festival in Fresno. Her performances have been broadcast on radio stations nationwide and her YouTube channel boasts well over 1.5 million views by organ fans around the globe. Her Regional AGO Convention recitals include North Central (Minneapolis, 2023), Southeast (Aiken, South Carolina, 2023), Mid-Atlantic (southern New Jersey, 2019), Southwest (Dallas, 2017), and Northeast (joint National Convention of the Royal Canadian College of Organists, Montreal, 2017). Her National AGO appearances include the online 2019 Organfest and the 2016 National Convention in Houston. She has also performed at several National Conventions of the Organ Historical Society.

Ms. Berney graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music in 2019 with an Artist Diploma in Organ Performance and a Performer's Certificate in Harpsichord Performance. In 2017 she graduated summa cum laude from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music in Houston, where she completed a five-year combined Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degree program in Organ Performance. She was appointed director of music at St. Paul's Parish, K Street (Washington, DC) in August 2023. Prior positions include director of music and artistic ministries at the King of Glory Lutheran Church in Dallas; cathedral organist at Houston's Christ Church Cathedral; and assistant organist at the Parish of St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Catherine of Siena in New York City. Further information can be found at monicaberney.com.

The Music

The program today pays tribute to the organ's role in the history of the church. The world awaits the coming of Christ in the music of Marcel Dupré, revels in the pastoral simplicity of Percy Whitlock, and acknowledges the Ascension in a towering composition by Olivier Messiaen. As today's organist Monica Berney writes, "we have color, melody, rhythm, the familiar, the awe-inspiring, and the puzzling ... all in attractive balance."

"The World Awaiting the Savior," from *Symphonie-Passion*

Marcel Dupré (1886–1971)

Symphonie-Passion by the French organist and composer Marcel Dupré had its beginnings on the composer's 1921 Christmas tour of the United States. In a recital on the renowned Grand Organ at the John Wanamaker department store in Philadelphia, Dupré improvised on four melodies provided by the audience. He subsequently published these improvisations as *Symphonie-Passion*, a four-movement solo organ symphony depicting the life of Christ. The opening, "The World Awaiting the Savior," is based on the chant "Jesu redemptor omnium" (known in hymnals as "O Savior of Our Fallen Race") and begins with the world in chaos. The plainsong is gently introduced and is later heard in canon with the pedal. A key shift from D minor to D major allows hopefulness to prevail over despair.

Selections from *Six Pieces for Piano* (arranged by Monica Berney)

Johannes Brahms (1833–97)

Six Pieces for Piano are among the final piano works of Johannes Brahms, composed from his Austrian summer spa getaway. The collection of miniatures is divided into two groups of three, with each set including a minor/major pair followed by a third work in a minor key a whole step lower. The first three, two intermezzos and a ballade, are heard today as arranged by Monica Berney. The opening Intermezzo in A minor is marked by descending octaves and sweeping arpeggios. The following Intermezzo in A major is one of Brahms's most lyrical piano compositions, featuring tender melodic passages complemented by a cradling accompaniment. The heroic passages of the closing Ballade in G minor are emphasized by decisive octaves and juxtaposed by a lyrical middle section.

Prelude and Fugue in B minor

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

The Baroque keyboard prelude and fugue can be traced to the early 1700s but was elevated to new heights by Johann Sebastian Bach, who cultivated the genre primarily through his keyboard music. A watermark from a 1727 autograph score of the Prelude and Fugue in B minor, BWV 544, places the organ work

during Bach's Leipzig years and likely composed before 1731. Its melancholic key of B minor was considered unusual at the time and was often used by Bach for mournful occasions. This work may have served as the prelude and postlude in a funeral for the wife of a government official, possibly performed alongside Cantata No. 198, *Lass, Fürstin, lass noch einen Strahl* (Let, Princess, Let Still One More Glance). This piece is also noteworthy for its prominent use of pedal, a compositional device that set the German Baroque organ genre apart from the rest of Europe.

Recalling the concerto style of Antonio Vivaldi, the Prelude consists of four ritornello sections interspersed with contrapuntal episodes. Octave dotted rhythms in the pedal are contrasted by 32nd-note sequences. The subject of the Fugue is stepwise and singable, with an extensive central section for manuals alone underscoring the importance of the pedal in the organ works of Bach.

Fantasie Choral No. 2

Percy Whitlock (1903–46)

The English composer Percy Whitlock served as director of music at St. Stephen's Church in the coastal town of Bournemouth as well as borough organist at the Bournemouth Pavilion Theatre. His organ repertoire often calls for large numbers of orchestral stops and a combination system capable of rapid shifts in registration. A lifelong railway enthusiast, Whitlock was diagnosed with tuberculosis while only in his 20s and died far too young of a stroke at the age of 42.

Whitlock's Fantasie Choral No. 2 in F-sharp minor was one of a pair of Chorals dating from 1931 and revised in 1933. He described the Fantasie as a "set of free variations on a sixteen-bar tune of folksong-like character," paying tribute to Ralph Vaughan Williams with a theme related to Vaughan Williams's Five English Folk Songs. Whitlock's treatment of melodic material ranges from simple two-line passages to a complex texture with running 16th notes, and a signature tuba stop effect appearing late in the score.

Fourth Movement from Sinfonietta (arranged by Monica Berney)

Nikolai Kapustin (1937–2020)

With an extensive repertory ranging from solo piano to orchestral big band, the Ukrainian composer and pianist Nikolai Kapustin composed in a style once described as "simmered in an American jazz stew." Jazz was prohibited in Kapustin's Soviet world but could be heard clandestinely in urban clubs and over the radio. With his 1986 Sinfonietta, Op. 49, Kapustin turned away from the prescribed USSR's Ministry of Culture style to the freer character of jazz. Sinfonietta began as an orchestral work, and later became popular in an arrangement for piano four-hands. Monica Berney arranged its fourth movement (Rondo) for organ.

Selections from *L'Ascension*

Olivier Messiaen (1908–92)

The organ works of the French composer and organist Olivier Messiaen are infused with his deeply held Roman Catholic faith and a desire to musically express religious ideas. Also a theorist, Messiaen devised his own "modes of limited transposition," often combined with exotic rhythms and incorporating birdcalls paying tribute to his passionate interest in ornithology.

The 1933 *L'Ascension* was initially composed as a four-movement orchestral work; Messiaen later transcribed the piece for solo organ, retaining much of the original material. Each of the four movements is preceded by liturgical text, with the second, "Serene Alleluias," inscribed with "We beseech you, O God ... that we may dwell in heaven in spirit" from the Mass for Ascension Day. Adapted from the original orchestral version, this movement opens with toccata-like passages over an extended pedal tone. The third movement "Outbursts of Joy" recalls Baroque dance forms with syncopated rhythms and double unison 32nd-note passages between manuals, and is prefaced with instructions from the apostle Paul to "Let us give thanks to God the Father, who has made us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in humility ... resurrected us and seated us in the heavens, in Jesus Christ." Messiaen's music serves as a joyful conclusion to a program tying together the Easter season, the majesty and complexity of Bach and Brahms, and the energy of once-forbidden jazz.

—Nancy Plum

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

Aria: An accompanied solo song (often in ternary form), usually in an opera or oratorio

Arpeggio: A broken chord (with notes played in succession instead of together)

Ballade: A term applied to an instrumental (normally piano) piece in a narrative style

Cantata: A multmovement vocal piece consisting of arias, recitatives, ensembles, and choruses and based on a continuous narrative text

Chorale: A hymn tune of the German Protestant Church, or one similar in style. Chorale settings are vocal, instrumental, or both.

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Chromatic: Relating to tones foreign to a given key (scale) or chord

Contrapuntal: See counterpoint

Counterpoint: The combination of simultaneously sounding musical lines

Diatonic: Melody or harmony drawn primarily from the tones of the major or minor scale

Fantasia: A composition free in form and more or less fantastic in character

Fugue: A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice and then imitated by the other voices in succession, reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

Intermezzo: A short connecting instrumental movement in an opera or other musical work

Monophony: Music for a single voice or part

Octave: The interval between any two notes that are seven diatonic (nonchromatic) scale degrees apart. Two notes an octave apart are different only in their relative registers.

Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.

Oratorio: Large-scale dramatic composition originating in the 16th century with text usually based on religious subjects. Oratorios are performed by choruses and solo voices with an instrumental accompaniment, and are similar to operas but without costumes, scenery, and actions.

Plainsong: The official monophonic unison chant (originally unaccompanied) of the Christian liturgies

Recitative: Declamatory singing, free in tempo and rhythm. Recitative has also sometimes been used to refer to parts of purely instrumental works that resemble vocal recitatives.

Ritornello: Literally "a little thing that returns." Relatively short passages of music played by the entire ensemble alternating with sections dominated by the soloist(s).

Rondo: A form frequently used in symphonies and concertos for the final movement. It consists of a main section that alternates with a variety of contrasting sections (A-B-A-C-A etc.).

Scale: The series of tones which form (a) any major or minor key or (b) the chromatic scale of successive semi-tonic steps

Sinfonietta: A small symphony, sometimes for a chamber orchestra

Syncopation: A shift of rhythmic emphasis off the beat

Ternary: A musical form in three sections, ABA, in which the middle section is different than the outer sections

Toccata: Literally "to touch." A piece intended as a display of manual dexterity, often free in form and almost always for a solo keyboard instrument.

Tonic: The keynote of a scale

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