

Sunday, January 21, 2024

3:00pm

Madonna della Strada Chapel

Brian Schoettler, Organ

Dialogue in C from Suite No. 3	Louis Marchand (1669-1732)
Passacaglia in C Minor, BWV 582	Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Scherzo	Brian Schoettler (b. 1988)
Symphony No. 6 (Pastoral), Op. 68 I. Allegro ma non troppo	Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) trans. Brian Schoettler
Symphonie Gothique, Op. 70 I. Moderato II. Andante sostenuto III. Allegro IV. Moderato (Variations)	Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)

Brian Schoettler serves as Minister of Music & Organist at First United Methodist Church in Evanston, Illinois where he directs their Chancel, Festival, Handbell, and Children's Choirs and plays their recently restored Austin organs (IV/78, II/15). He is chair of the Organ Department at the Music Institute of Chicago and teaches music theory for their pre-college Academy. He earned his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Organ Performance and Literature at the Eastman School of Music, his Master of Music degree in Organ Performance and Composition at Westminster Choir College, and his bachelor's degree in Organ Performance, Church Music, and Instrumental Music Education at Carthage College. He studied organ with Edoardo Bellotti, Michael Burkhardt, Ken Cowan, David Higgs, Richard Hoskins, and Alan Morrison and composition with Benjamin C.S. Boyle.

Recently, Brian has been a guest performer with the Artemis Chamber Orchestra, the Elmhurst Symphony, and the Milwaukee Symphony. As a member of the Westminster Symphonic Choir, he performed with the Berlin Philharmonic, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Orchestra under the batons of such conductors as Jacques Lacombe, Simon Rattle, and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Brian has been featured on American Public Media's radio program "Pipedreams," on the Notre Dame Children's Choir's CD "O Day of Peace," and in a video showcase of Austin's Op. 319 produced by the Organ Media Foundation.

Brian has participated in summer composition programs at Yale's Institute of Sacred Music and with the European American Musical Alliance at the Schola Cantorum in Paris and his compositions have been performed throughout the



United States. His compositions include his "Scherzo" for organ, "The Windows" for choir and orchestra, liturgical music including his "Service in B-flat," and a corpus of sacred music for choir and instrumental ensembles. His cantata, "Passages from Luke," is available in three versions: for piano four-hands, for string orchestra and organ, and for full orchestra. Brian is a member of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) and serves as a board member of the North Shore chapter of the American Guild of Organists (AGO).

For more information about Brian Schoettler, visit www.brianschoettler.com

Today's program begins with works by two virtuosos from the end of the Baroque era. In 1717 Louis Marchand and Johann Sebastian Bach were set to have a contest to determine who was the better musician. On the day of the event Marchand left town and, in his absence, Bach alone demonstrated his skill at the keyboard. While the contest never came to fruition, an exceptional work by each composer is presented for your consideration. Marchand's **Dialogue** begins with a Grand Jeu utilizing the commanding full ensemble of the French Classic organ. The leaping, triadic figures used throughout the section evoke the sound of trumpet fanfares. The second section for the foundation stops is written in the durezze e ligature style. The third section is a duo for the Cornet and the Cromorne. The final section returns to the Grand Jeu – this time with a gigue.

Bach's **Passacaglia**, a work known to many audiences through transcriptions, is one of his earliest masterworks. Composed as early as 1708 in Weimar, the work's maturity and control of counterpoint are exceptional. As a form, the passacaglia is a dance which literally means to "walk down the street" - a term that may originate from its earliest function as an interlude during outdoor performances. The passacaglia utilizes a slow, repeating bass figure which assumed a more thematic role as the genre developed. Bach's **Passacaglia** drew from models including those of his teacher, Dietrich Buxtehude, with whom he had recently studied in Lübeck. Whether conscious or coincidental, the first half of Bach's **Passacaglia** theme and the subject of the fugue that follows bear a notable resemblance to another model: the theme of the Christe section in an organ mass by André Raison.

Beginning with a statement of the theme in the pedals, Bach continues with twenty variations utilizing different figuration for each of the eight-measure variations. The fugue continues with the Raison fragment of the passacaglia theme as its subject in counterpoint with two distinct countersubjects. Bach explores nearly every combination of these components interspersed with episodes that continue to utilize motivic fragments of the countersubjects. Peter Williams notes: "If ever there were a work greater than the sum of its parts — a singable theme, impeccable harmonic logic, clear pedigree, imaginative response to other music, conscious manipulation of motifs, careful working-out of permutation, calculated shape – it is the *Passacaglia in C Minor*."

After the monumental **Passacaglia**, my **Scherzo** serves as a brief intermezzo. Composed during my graduate studies at Westminster Choir College, the chromaticism, syncopation, and bright registration contribute to the work's playful character. The Beethoven transcription that follows was a pandemic project in observance of the 250th anniversary of the composer's birth in 2020. Beethoven's "Pastoral" *Symphony No. 6* (1808) was notably featured in Disney's *Fantasia* and about half of the first movement is presented in my transcription for organ.

Beethoven composed nine symphonies so perhaps it is natural to continue with Widor's ninth symphony for organ. Composed in 1895, **Symphonie gothique** marks the beginning of Charles-Marie Widor's latest and most mature period of composition. Widor announced, "I can no longer think of any organ art as holy which is not consecrated to the church through its themes, whether it be from the chorale or from Gregorian chant." Dedicated to Saint-Ouen of Rouen, the first two movements depict the Gothic architecture of the cathedral. The first movement depicts the grand scale of the structure while the second movement is more lyrical as it depicts the interior beauty of the space. The third and fourth movements utilize the Christmas Introit *Puer natus est nobis*. The third movement is a fugue presenting the chant in the pedals which leads to a series of variations in the fourth movement. After the theme, the six variations showcase the various colors of the organ and demonstrate various applications of canonic treatment. Widor adds his own countermelody which appears between variations and is developed in the final Allegro. In *Symphonie gothique* Widor achieves a work of great craftsmanship which weds the sacred and the symphonic.

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