Guest Artist Recital

Bruce Neswick

*Organ*

Saturday, 29 February 2020, 5 p.m.
Walla Walla University Church
Program

PIÈCE D’ORGUE, BWV 572

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

J.S. Bach is arguably the greatest composer of all time … at least in the opinion of Anthony Tommasini, New York Times music critic. Back in 2011, Tommasini famously unfolded his list of the top 10 composers over 10 weeks, ending with Bach in the number one spot. Every organist in the land went wild that day. I mean, who could imagine that a lowly church organist-choirmaster in a moderate-sized German city, coping with a large family and demands on his time that would make even the most adept multi-taskers among us quake in their work boots – who could imagine that such a man would rise to dominate our musical lives and to inhabit our conscious and unconscious selves with such overwhelming beauty and architectural power?

From October 2016 through September 2018, my former assistant at Trinity Cathedral, Chris Lynch, and I played the complete free (i.e., not based on pre-existing melody) works of Bach, offered as the closing voluntaries on each of those Sundays. Pièce d’Orgue, a relatively early work that owes its inspiration to the French Baroque style of writing for the keyboards, began and ended the series. In three clearly defined sections, the weighty central Gravement exhibits its indebtedness to the French style through its thick, five-voice texture (typical of the Plein Jeu – or full chorus – style of Bach’s contemporaries in France), extensive deployment of double – and sometimes triple – harmonic suspensions, its deceptive cadences (those sneaky French!) and its heavy reliance on chromatic tension (a fancy way of describing notes that emerge outside the prevailing key). On either side of this monumental Gravement are leaner and meaner sections (titled, respectively, Très vitement and Lentement) that seem to blend together elements of the North German organ toccata style and French harpsichord fantasy style. As always, Bach, the Great Internationalist, pulls it off seamlessly.

WWU Department of Music
Upcoming Events

VOICE STUDENT RECITAL:
THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK
Sunday, 1 March 2020, 7:30 p.m.
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Center Auditorium

CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA WINTER CONCERT
Saturday, 7 March 2020, 4 p.m.
Walla Walla University Church

YOUNG ARTIST NIGHT CONCERT
Sunday, 8 March 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Center Auditorium

BIG BAND WINTER CONCERT
Wednesday, 11 March 2020, 7:30 p.m.
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Center Auditorium

VOICE MASTER CLASS
Julie Anne Wieck
Friday, 13 March 2020, 3 p.m.
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Center Auditorium

PIANO FESTIVAL
Monday, 30 March 2020
Student Recital – 12:30 p.m.
Master Class 1 – 3:00 p.m.
Master Class 2 – 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, 31 March 2020
Guest Lecture – 11:00 a.m.
Master Class 3 – 2:00 p.m.
Awards – 4:15 p.m.
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Center Auditorium

GUEST AND FACULTY PIANO RECITAL
Christopher Harding and Jinhyang Park
Tuesday, 31 March 2020, 7 p.m.
Melvin K. West Fine Arts Center Auditorium

The music department calendar may be viewed at http://music.wallawalla.edu
Anglican Musicians, Westminster Choir College Summer Session, the Montreat and Westminster Conferences of the Presbyterian Association of Musicians, the Disciples of Christ Musicians, the Conference of Lutheran Church Musicians, the Sewanee Church Music Conference, Organ Alive! and the Evergreen Conference. In recent years, he has performed at St. Florian Abbey, in Austria, as part of the annual BrucknerFest; at the Eastman Rochester Organ Initiative conference; and at the Yale Organ Week.

Mr. Neswick has been commissioned to compose for dozens of performers and churches throughout the United States, and his organ and choral music is published by Paraclete, Augsburg-Fortress, Selah, Vivace, Hope, Plymouth and St. James’ presses. Mr. Neswick’s skill at improvisation garnered him three first prizes from the 1989 San Anselmo Organ Festival; the 1990 American Guild of Organists' national convention in Boston; and the 1992 Rochette Concours at the Conservatoire de Musique in Geneva, Switzerland.

A graduate of Pacific Lutheran University and of the Yale School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music, Mr. Neswick’s teachers have included Robert Baker, David Dahl, Gerre Hancock, Margaret Irwin-Brandon and Lionel Rogg. A Fellow of the American Guild of Organists, Mr. Neswick has served the Guild in many capacities, including chapter dean, regional convention chair, regional education coordinator, member of the national nominating committee and member of the national improvisation competition committee. He was recently awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.

As a recitalist, Mr. Neswick has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe and has been a frequent performer at national and regional conventions of the American Guild of Organists. In 1994, he played the opening convocation for the national AGO convention held in Dallas, Texas, and he was a featured artist at the national AGO conventions in Seattle (in 2000), Washington, DC (in 2010) and Boston (in 2014). Mr. Neswick is represented by Phillip Truckenbrod Concert Artists.

PARTITA ON JESU, MEINE FREUDE Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748)

Second cousin of J.S. Bach and fellow organist-composer, J.G. Walther was, from 1707 onwards, the city organist of Weimar. There he taught Prince Johann Ernst and produced a monumental dictionary of music called *Musicalisches Lexicon*. He also composed dozens of organ works, including several Italian and German concerto transcriptions, some free works and over a hundred pieces based on Lutheran chorales. Within this latter category, his set of variations Johann Crüger’s simple yet eloquent melody for “Jesu, meine Freude” is among his most popular; it is a veritable compendium of Baroque variation techniques for the keyboard.

PRAELUDIUM IN C, BuxWV 136 Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

This past season, my current assistant, David Boeckh, and I played all the organ free works of the great North German master Buxtehude, and the second piece in our survey was this *Praeludium in C*, a bright work, brimming with melodic motifs and rhythmic patterns suited to this happy key. The opening begins with a flourish based on a double scale, the momentum of which helps to fill out the ensuing harmonic progressions. Flourish gives way to a repeated-note fugal passage, very typical of this composer and never straying far from the home key. Eventually morphing into a short improvisatory passage containing some mild chromatic (or out-of-the-key) flavoring, a strong resolution allows for a big breath before the final two fugal passages, which are separated by yet another brief improvisatory riff. The final fugal interlude transitions into the very last section of the piece, a manuals-only rush to the end paying homage to the harpsichord writing of the era.

VARIATIONS ON LOBE DEN HERREN David P. Dahl (b. 1934)

*in six movements*

My college organ professor, David Dahl, had and continues to have a great deal of influence over the direction of my life and career.
One of his many gifts as a performer and a teacher is as an improviser, and I well remember the sensitive and encouraging way he played hymns for our daily chapel services at Pacific Lutheran University. In the last 20 years or so, David has turned his attention increasingly to writing down his musical thoughts and has had great success in publishing many of his organ and choral works. His short set of variations on the great German chorale Lobe den Herren was commissioned by Mark Brombaugh and Kathryn Nichols (the current musicians at Christ Church Episcopal, in Tacoma) to honor Mark’s brother and sister-in-law, John and Christa Brombaugh, on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary in 2011.

IN PARADISUM (from Triptyque Grégorien, 1978)  
Jean Langlais  
(1907-1991)

Student of Marcel Dupré, Paul Dukas and Charles Tournemire, Langlais became the organist of Sainte-Clotilde in 1944, following in the footsteps of César Franck and Tournemire and remaining there until three years before his death. From that exalted perch, Langlais carved out an important niche in the French organ world, writing highly idiomatic and expressive music, imbued as it is with the melodic suppleness and harmonic implications of plainchant. In paradisum is the final chant at a Requiem Eucharist, and it has been a source of inspiration for composers through the centuries.

ARCHANGEL SUITE (2011)  
Craig Phillips  
(b. 1961)

Michael  
“...there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon.”  
Revelation 12:7

Gabriel  
“Messenger of God – messenger of the Annunciation”

Raphael  
“It is God who heals – Archangel of healing”

Uriel  
“God is my light – Archangel of light”

Craig Phillips is the Director of Music at All Saints’ Episcopal Church, Beverly Hills, California. A distinguished alumnus of the Eastman School of Music, Phillips is one of the most widely-performed composers on the American church scene today. I was privileged to give the first performance of his Archangel Suite for a Michaelmas hymn festival that served as the final dedicatory event of the then-new Taylor and Boody organ at St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, Bel Air, Virginia.

Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, Op. 99, No. 3 (1894)  
Camille Saint-Saëns  
(1835-1921)

Saint-Saëns, known to most music lovers for his colorful orchestral writing, was also the organist of the Parisian church of La Madeleine and an organ improvisateur of great repute. In his Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, the toccata-like flair of the Prelude notwithstanding, he strikes a harmonic, melodic and structural pose of considerable restraint -- a restraint typical of the anti-Impressionists clustered together in the French music academies.

IMPROVISATION ON A SUBMITTED THEME

+++ 

BRUCE NESWICK is the Canon for Music at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Portland, Oregon. Prior to coming to Oregon, he served as Associate Professor of Music in Organ and Sacred Music at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University and Assistant Organist of St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church, Louisville, Kentucky. Before moving to Indiana, he was the Director of Music at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, where he directed the Cathedral Choir of Girls, Boys and Adults and had oversight of the musical life of that historic Cathedral.

Active in the field of church music, Mr. Neswick holds the Fellowship degree from the Royal School of Church Music, for whom he has conducted several courses for boy and girl choristers. He has served on the faculties of and performed for several church music conferences, including Master Schola, the Mississippi Conference, the Association of