



**Peoria  
Chapter**

**American  
Guild of  
Organists**

**BARBARA THOMSON**

**ORGAN CONCERT**

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1985  
3:30 P.M.**

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
411 W. LAKE AVENUE  
PEORIA, ILLINOIS**

---

## **BARBARA THOMSON — Organist**

---

Barbara Thomson has concertized extensively in the United States and Europe, and has been critically acclaimed for her technique, musicianship, and ability to communicate.

Her performances have included the Riverside Church and St. Michael's Church, New York, the National Presbyterian Center Inter-American Festival, Washington, D.C., the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Baltimore, and the Philadelphia Krisheim Church Music Conference. She was a guest soloist at the 1980 National Convention of the American Society of University Composers, Memphis, the Festival Marie Schutz, Austria, and the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris. She was a finalist in the prestige International Congress of Organists Organ playing Competition, and has recorded for Voice of America, Radio Bremen (Germany) and Vermont Public Television. Barbara has recorded for Spectrum Records and played on a series at Trinity Church, Wall Street in New York City.

Miss Thomson is currently Voorees Chapel Organist at Rutgers University.



# Program

Prelude, Fugue, and Chaconne in C Major

Dietrich Buxtehude  
1637-1707

Two Advent Chorale Preludes

Johann Sebastian Bach  
1685-1750

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland BWV 659  
Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme BWV 645

Prelude and Fugue in E-Flat Major (St. Anne) BWV 552

Johann Sebastian Bach

## *INTERMISSION*

Sonata III

Felix Mendelssohn  
1809-1847

I. Con moto Maestoso

Resurrection (1981)

Larry King  
B. 1934

Lament - The Rising - The Ecstasy - Reflection

Organ Symphony VI

Charles-Marie Widor  
1844-1937

I. Allegro

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Prelude, Fugue, and Chaconne in C Major - Buxtehude

Dietrich Buxtehude was probably the most highly respected church musician and composer in north Germany during his lifetime. He worked primarily at the Marienkirche in Lübeck, and the young Bach was so anxious to hear his music that he travelled 300 miles (no mean feat in the early 1700's) to meet him and hear his famous "Abendmusik" concerts during the Advent season of 1705.

Bach's early organ music is modelled very closely on Buxtehude's. The prelude and fugue form which Bach developed so highly was in Buxtehude's time not so clearly separated into distinct prelude and fugue, but rather was a loosely bound group of fantasy-like sections and two or even three different fugues, all of which ran together without clear stopping points.

This Prelude, Fugue, and Chaconne opens with a dramatic pedal solo, followed by several sections of free counterpoint. The fugue follows immediately, and after a brief section of free counterpoint, goes directly into the chaconne. (A chaconne is simply a piece which uses a repeating bass line over and over with counterpoint written above it). The work concludes with a flourish of rapid scale passages leading to the final cadence.

### Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland - J.S. Bach

(Savior of the heathen, come.  
Virgin's Son, here make Thy home.  
Wonder at it, heaven and earth,  
That the Lord chose such a birth.)

This beautiful chorale prelude is one of several settings Bach wrote of this Advent chorale. In this piece, the chorale is ornamented so highly that it is virtually unrecognisable to the listener as the simple melody it really is. It is from the collection of chorale preludes known as "the Great Eighteen" chorales.

### Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme - J.S. Bach

(Wake, awake, for night is flying,  
The watchmen on the heights are crying:  
Awake, Jerusalem, at last!  
Midnight hears the welcome voices,  
And at the thrilling cry rejoices:  
Come forth, ye virgins, night is past!  
The Bridegroom comes, awake,  
Your lamps with gladness take; Alleluia!  
And for his marriage feast prepare,  
for ye must go to meet Him there.)

This chorale prelude, from the "Schübler Chorales", is really a transcription by Bach of a movement from his own cantata of the same name. It is one of the best-known of his chorale preludes.



## Prelude and Fugue in E-Flat Major (St. Anne) - J.S. Bach

Bach's great Prelude and Fugue in E-Flat Major was originally written as the beginning and ending pieces of a larger collection of works known officially as "Clavierübung III" and unofficially as the "Catechism Chorales" or "Organ Mass". In this collection, Bach used German chorale melodies to correspond to the Greater and Lesser Catechisms of Martin Luther. ("When Jesus to the Jordan Came" to represent baptism, for example). He began the collection with the Prelude in E-Flat and ended it, some twenty-seven pieces later, with the Fugue in E-Flat.

Normally, an organ prelude or fugue would not be expected to be musically representative of an idea or story, but in this case, these two beginning and ending pieces are spiritually allied to the intervening chorales, and are musically representative of the Trinity.

Both the prelude and fugue are in the key of E-flat major, which has three flats. Both pieces have three themes, representing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In the prelude, the Father is represented by the majestic opening theme, with strong chords and the dotted rhythms often used for the entrance of a king into the courts of the time. The second theme represents Christ, and uses a pattern of descending notes representing God descending from heaven to earth. The third theme represents the Holy Spirit of the Pentecost - a rushing wind - with a theme which flows along in running sixteenth notes. These three themes alternate throughout the prelude, ending with the Father theme.

The structure of the fugue is even more fascinating. It is a triple fugue with three themes, and both the second (Christ) and third (Holy Spirit) themes combine with the opening (Father) theme. Further, Bach has used numerical symbolism to represent the Trinity. In Christian numerology, (a concept foreign to us now, but common in the Middle Ages and through the Renaissance and Baroque periods), nine is the perfect number because it is  $3 \times 3$ . In this fugue, the first section has 36 measures, and  $3+6=9$ . The second section has 45 measures, and  $4+5=9$ . The third section has 36 measures again. The grand total for the piece is 117,  $1+1+7=9$ , and any of the sections added to any of the other sections always results in a number which similarly equals nine!

It is awesome to approach an intellect as gigantic as Bach's, where he can play such complex games with themes and numbers and still produce a piece of music which not only flows as though there were no artifice to it, but stands as one of the great monuments of musical art.

Why did he do it? Partly, I am sure, as a challenge to himself as a composer, but more importantly because he was himself a devout believer, and this was yet another way he could declare his own faith and dedicate his work to God.

The work has been nicknamed the "St. Anne" because of the similarity of the fugue subject to the hymn tune St. Anne - Our God, Our Help in Ages Past. We shall never know if this similarity is purposeful or coincidental; the tune was written in England during Bach's lifetime, but it is not known if he was familiar with it.



### Sonata III - Con moto maestoso - Mendelssohn

Felix Mendelssohn is primarily known to us now as a composer, but he was in addition a very fine organist. It was he who was responsible for the rediscovery of Bach's music in Germany, and his own organ music is influenced by Bach's use of counterpoint.

Mendelssohn's six organ sonatas began life as organ "voluntaries". His publisher had requested that he write a series of voluntaries for organ, since they were in vogue at the time. By the time the works were complete, the publisher had changed his mind, and wanted organ sonatas! Mendelssohn, being a very practical fellow, simply grouped the single-movement voluntaries into multi-movement sonatas by choosing the voluntaries in related keys, putting them together, and changing the title. Thus, the movements were not composed to go together in the first place, and so playing only one movement of a sonata seems less sacriligious!

The first movement of the third sonata is a large piece, and uses the German chorale "Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir" (Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee) prominently in the pedal. It is not a despairing work, however - rather, a grand and ultimately triumphant one.

### Resurrection - Larry King

The composer says of his work:

"Resurrection" portrays in freely structured fragments the four aspects of the resurrection experience: Lament-The Rising-The Ecstasy-Reflection..."Lament combines the liturgical mourning of the plainsong "Vinea mea electa" (O my vineyard, I planted and tended thee...and thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour) with a soulful expression of contemporary grief. "The Rising" grows quietly from this grief, using twelve-tone rows and techniques to express its cosmic nature. "The Ecstasy" develops a populist alleluia strain with embellishments not unlike those used in the music of the Aquarian Age. "Reflection" combines the liturgical rejoicing of the plainsong introit for Easter Day "Haec Dies" (This is the day which the Lord has made) with the alleluia fragments.

The result will hopefully convey a fresh vision of the historic resurrection of Jesus the Christ with a prayer for the resurrection of the consciousness that reflects and implements his ministry."

The four movements are played without pause. Larry King is Organist and Choirmaster at Trinity Church on Wall Street in New York City.

### Organ Symphony VI - Allegro - Widor

Widor was organist at the famed church of St. Sulpice in Paris for over sixty years. He wrote many works for organ, but is best known for his eleven multi-movement organ "Symphonies". They are not symphonies in the sense of using a symphony orchestra, but rather in using the organ as if it were an orchestra - exploiting its colors and idiomatic effects. Widor himself spoke of the modern organ as essentially "symphonique", an instrument of expression, and not merely the medium of "scholastic polyphony". (So much for Bach!)

The Allegro of the sixth Symphony is one of Widor's best. It opens with the theme stated in massive chords, then continues through contrasting sections to a dramatic and exciting conclusion.