



The Peoria Chapter of
The American Guild of Organists

Presents

Heather Hinton

in Recital

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Peoria, Illinois

March 16, 1997

3:30 p.m.

Toccata in F Major, BWV 540

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Variations on *Onder een linde groen*

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck
(1562-1621)

Sonata No. 8, Op. 178 in B Minor

I. Moderato - Allegro

II. Adagio

III. Moderato - Moderato assai

Gustav Merkel
(1827-1885)

Pause

Canon in B Minor, Op. 56, No. 5

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Pastorale and Toccata (1991)

David Conte
(b. 1955)

Vocalise, Op. 34, No. 14 (arr. Patricia Bird)

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Symphonie V, Op. 42, No. 1

I. Allegro vivace

Charles-Marie Widor
(1844-1937)

Program Notes

Serving as organist of the Oude Kerke in Amsterdam for forty-four years, Sweelinck was famous as a performer and improviser on both organ and harpsichord, and was one of the leading composers of vocal and keyboard music of his time. He was also one of the most influential and sought-after teachers, as his teaching reputation was well-known throughout northern Europe. Along with fantasias and toccatas, variations were a favorite compositional form of Sweelinck's for the keyboard—he wrote several sets of variations on well-known melodies of the time, utilizing secular melodies, dance tunes, and chorale tunes. The figurations used in the variations reflect a strong influence from the English Virginalist School, and rhythmic patterns provide much vitality and interest in the variations, often progressing to more active patterns in each successive variation. *Onder een linde groen* ("Under a Linden Green"), a Dutch secular folksong derived from the English ballad *All in a Garden Green*, depicts the story of two young lovers. Sweelinck's variations effectively capture the lighthearted, playful character of this tune.

Gustav Merkel was a world-renowned organist who lived and worked in Dresden, where he served as organist at various churches, including the Catholic Court church, and held the position of Professor of Organ at the Dresden Conservatory. He received his musical training in Dresden as well, studying composition with Robert Schumann, piano with Friedrich Wieck (who was Schumann's piano teacher and father-in-law), and organ with Johann Gottlob Schneider, an important representative of the Bach tradition, whose father had studied organ with a student of J. S. Bach. In addition to being an accomplished organist, Merkel was also a prolific composer—he wrote nearly two hundred works, including nine sonatas for the organ. Although his organ sonatas are not very well-known today, they form a noteworthy contribution to the 19th-century German organ repertoire, occupying an important position in the line of organ sonatas between Mendelssohn and Rheinberger. The Eighth Sonata, published in 1885, stands out in the 19th-century repertoire because it includes a passacaglia as its final movement. The passacaglia form, which is based on the continuous repetition of a ground-bass theme, was immensely popular in the Baroque era, but fell into obscurity in the 19th century. Merkel was apparently inspired to revive this traditional form by the appearance of a passacaglia in Rheinberger's Eighth Organ Sonata, published in 1882, which was the first significant passacaglia written for the organ since J. S. Bach's famous passacaglia. Merkel's Passacaglia looks back to both of these Passacaglias, exhibiting influences from Rheinberger as well as Bach.

According to David Conte, "*Pastorale and Toccata* was written for David Higgs, who gave the first performance in the fall of 1991. The *Pastorale* evokes the music of shepherds, their pipes and shawms. The main portions of the work are characterized by angular melodies supported by long-held drones and lilting ostinatos. Contrasting sections are improvisatory in character. The mood of the work, though amiable and bucolic, is also by turns sly and elusive. The *Toccata* opens with the full organ playing massive fortissimo chords, setting a declamatory, oratorical tone. The music quickly gathers energy and breaks into a fast virtuosic gigue. After this extended central gigue section, the opening declamatory chords return, this time in the form of a chorale accompanied by a walking bass. The work ends with a brilliant coda in the French-toccata style."

The Organ Symphonies of Charles-Marie Widor were instrumental in the development of the French Symphonic tradition, which was founded by César Franck and culminated in the Organ Symphonies of Widor's pupil, Louis Vierne. The symphonic school of 19th-century French organ composition was influenced by the orchestral organs of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, whose company built organs from approximately 1840-1900. In 1870, Widor was appointed to be the organist at the 17th-century Parisian church, Saint-Sulpice, where he continued to play for the next sixty-four years. The church housed one of Cavaillé-Coll's finest instruments, a five-manual organ of some ninety-eight stops, whose rich orchestral colors inspired Widor to write ten symphonies for the organ between 1876-1900. The first movement of the Fifth Symphony is an imaginative and unusual set of continuous variations based on a highly memorable original melody. Due to Widor's free treatment of variation form, which includes lengthy interludes and developmental sections, the term "fantasy-variations" appropriately describes the form of this movement. Each of the variations contains highly contrasting textures, figurations, and tonal colors, displaying Widor's highly developed compositional creativity.

The Artist

Heather Hinton, winner of the 1996 National Young Artists Competition in Organ Performance of the American Guild of Organists, is a native of Louisiana. A doctoral student at The Eastman School of Music, she earned a master of music degree at Eastman in 1993 and a Performer's Certificate in 1994. Currently a student of David Higgs, her previous Eastman teachers were Russell Saunders and Arthur Haas (harpsichord). She presently serves as organist of Brighton Presbyterian Church in Rochester.

Ms. Hinton earned her bachelor's degree in music and French from Wellesley College, where she began organ study with James David Christie as a junior in 1989, winning second prize in the Sydney Case Young Organists Competition the following spring. In 1991 she received the Billings Prize in Music and Phi Beta Kappa honors. She was the 1993 winner of the AGO Region II Competition for Young Organists, and won second prize in the 1994 Gruenstein Memorial Competition. Ms. Hinton began piano study at age five, and studied from 1983-1991 with Wha-Kyung Byun at the New England Conservatory. As a pianist, she has won several competitions and has appeared as soloist with orchestras in Louisiana, Texas and Massachusetts.

During the current season Ms. Hinton is playing recitals in Denver, Pasadena, San Francisco, Nashville, Houston and several other major cities in the United States. She is married to cellist Kurt Fowler.

Ms. Hinton is represented by Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc.

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American Guild of Organists*

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