

Saint Patrick's Church in New Orleans

An Evening of Organ Music

Wednesday 18 November 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Welcome to St. Patrick's Church! We are grateful for your presence here this evening. As a courtesy to your fellow listeners, please silence your mobile telephones. You are kindly requested not to applaud after the music. Thank you!

Fantasia super "Io son ferito lasso:" fuga quadruplici, SSWV 103 Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654)

Palestrina's madrigal *Io son ferito ahi lasso* ("Alas! I have been wounded") enjoyed great popularity in its day, serving as the inspiration for many other compositions, most notably a Mass by Lassus and this fantasy by Scheidt, star pupil of the great Dutch organist Sweelinck. The four themes of the quadruple fugue are the opening phrase of the madrigal, the same melody backwards, a descending chromatic scale, and *that* melody played backwards (*i.e.*, an ascending chromatic scale). These themes are given highly imaginative contrapuntal treatment, including simultaneous combination at the fantasy's thrilling conclusion.

Sonata No. 6 in G major, BWV 530

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

i. Vivace

ii. Lente [sic]

iii. Allegro

Bach's first biographer relates that "Bach composed [the six 'trio' sonatas for organ] for his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, who, by practicing them, had to prepare himself to become the great performer on the organ that he afterward was. It is impossible to say enough of their beauty." Bach's second son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, wrote in his father's obituary that the sonatas "are written in such *galant* style that they still sound very good, and never grow old, but on the contrary will outlive all revolutions of fashion in music" (more than might be said for his own compositions!). Professor David Yearsley, in his book *Bach's Feet*, points out another aspect of these pieces: "[F]or all their conversational refinement and gallant finesse, the relentlessness of the pitfalls is unmatched, the slightest hitch is noticed, the disturbance of the flow marked by the player's body and the listener's ear. Things can go wrong immediately and irrevocably as in no other genre: it is impossible to fake your way through a trio sonata movement."

This masterpiece demands superlatives. Another Bach biographer, Philipp Spitta, felt that it should more properly be called an organ symphony in two movements. It is Bach's largest essay in the prelude and fugue format as well as the longest fugue he ever composed, and the most successful example of the combination of fugal procedure with the ABA *da capo* form. Both movements are remarkable among 18th Century keyboard music for their extensive use of scales. The prelude is occupied with the development of no fewer than five themes; the fugue is nicknamed the "Wedge" (in England, the "Scissors"), because of the shape of its subject in music notation.

Choral No. 2 in B minor

César-Auguste Jean Guillaume Hubert Franck (1822-1890)

Franck was organist at the Basilica of Sainte Clotilde in Paris's fashionable Faubourg Saint Germain. His *Three Chorals* were based on themes of his own invention, and not on any pre-existing chant or chorale tunes. They were completed on his deathbed (they were at his bedside when the priest came to administer the last rites), and represent his finest achievement. The style is a uniquely French synthesis of Bach's contrapuntal technique, Beethoven's formal structure, Liszt's thematic development, and Wagner's yearning chromaticism.

While the first *Choral*, heard on this series in 2017, is broad and majestic, the second is restless and melancholy, and even turbulent at times. In form it is a passacaglia and fugue, heavily influenced by Bach's great *Passacaglia in C minor*. The actual *choral* section, heard only twice, is a haven of rest and peace.

The music this evening is offered

to the greater glory of God

in thanksgiving for the intercession of Saint Cecilia, patroness of organists (22 November)

and in loving memory of

Donald Everette Clark (1942-2020)

loyal friend, wise mentor, and faithful servant of the Church.

Of your charity, pray for his soul.

St. Patrick's is looking for sponsors for the music at Midnight Mass of Christmas (Schubert's *Mass in G*), and at our Christmas Lessons and Carols (Sunday 3 January). If you would like to help us, please contact Andrew Mills at Amills@arch-no.org, or 504.525.4413x1003. May God reward you for your generosity!