



Saint Patrick's Church in New Orleans

An Evening of Organ Music in Honour of St. Cecilia
on her feast day

Friday 22 November 2024 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!

The music this evening is offered
to the greater glory of God,
and in thanksgiving for the intercession of Saint Cecilia, patroness of organists.

Noël VI, sur les jeux d'Anches, sans tremblant, et en Duo: "Qu'Adam fut un pauvre homme"

Louis-Claude d'Aquin (1694-1772)

In an age that saw no shortage of child prodigies and *virtuosi*, d'Aquin managed to stand out from the crowd. At the age of six, he was presented at Court and played the *clavecin* (harpsichord) for Louis XIV and the Dauphin. Two years later, he conducted his grand motet *Beatus vir* in the Chapel Royal, where he had to stand on a table so that the singers could see his beat. At the age of 12, he was appointed organist at the Sainte Chapelle. This was the first of several illustrious church positions, culminating in 1755 at the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris. He was an enormously popular performer, known for his "unfaltering precision and evenness" both at the harpsichord and the organ, and especially renowned for his *Noëls*, or sets of variations on Christmas carols.

One of his contemporaries relates how d'Aquin, one Christmas, imitated the sound of a nightingale so perfectly on the organ that the parish treasurer sent the wardens and sidesmen to search among the vaults and in the attic for the bird. "But," the story somewhat wistfully concludes, "there was no nightingale; it was d'Aquin."

The *Noël* heard this evening is a rollicking setting ([to be played] "on the reed stops") of a carol telling the story of Adam and Eve:

*Adam fut un pauvre homme De nous faire damner
Pour un morceau de pomme Qu'il ne put avaler.
Sa femme sans cesse le flatte, le presse
D'en goûter un petit,
Croyant que la sagesse, Que Satan avait dit,
Gisait dedans ce fruit.*

Adam was a sorry sort of fellow to get us condemned
For a bit of apple that he couldn't even swallow.
His wife constantly urged him to taste a little of it,
Believing that wisdom (as Satan had told her)
Was to be found in that fruit.

The insistent triplets in the second half of the tune represent Eve's incessant nagging, which is turned to humorous effect in the final variation with its ingenious chains of echos.

*Ode for St. Cecilia's Day, HWV 76
ix. But oh! what art can teach?*

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

But oh! what art can teach,
What human voice can reach
The sacred organ's praise?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their heavenly ways
To join the choirs above.

– John Dryden (1631-1700)

*Sonata No. 5 in C major, BWV 529
i. Allegro
ii. Largo
iii. Allegro*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 543

J. S. Bach

Choral No. 1 in E major

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 chorale tunes. They were completed on his deathbed (the manuscript was 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 restless chromaticism.