



Department of Organ, Sacred Music and Historical Keyboards

Chengyu Zhang, organ
Non-degree Recital
from the studio of Professor Nathan Laube

Christ Church
141 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14604
May. 7, 2025 | 2:30 pm

On the Hook & Hastings Organ

3 Pièces pour Grand Orgue, CFF 102
I. Fantaisie

César Franck
(1822—1890)

3 Pieces for Organ, H.63
II. Adagio

Frank Bridge
(1879—1941)

On the Casparini Organ

Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr, BWV 662

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685—1750)

Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland, BWV 659

Toccata

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck
(1562—1621)

C. Franck: Fantaisie en La

In the year of 1878, “Palais du Trocadero” was built with a four-manual organ installed by Cavaille-Coll, who was the most important organ builder at his time. This is the first concert-hall organ built in France, and since its completion, organ recitals were constantly held there. Following other famous organists such as Guilmant and Saint-Saens, Franck was invited to play there in October of 1878. It was in this recital, Franck premiered his *Trois Pieces*, which he composed and learnt within a week. *Fantaisie en La* is the first of the *Trois Pieces*, and was what Franck opened the recital with. Originally, Franck titled it “Idylle”. Both titles imply the fact that this movement consists of many loosely organised motivic materials. Most noticeably is the six-note motif that appears at the very beginning and used throughout the piece. Another important motif is a lyrical descending line, accompanied by fast 16th notes. In the climax of the movement, Franck ingeniously overlaps the two materials on top of each other, and uses them as a way to unify the entire movement. The piece, however, ends on another motif played by Voix Humaine, which itself became one of the very few pieces that start with a major key and end in a tragic minor key.

F. Bridge: Adagio in E Major

Despite the fact that now mostly known only as the teacher of Benjamin Britten, Frank Bridge was actually an accomplished composer, violist and conductor. During his 62 years of life, he explored a wide range of composition styles from late Romantic to 12-tones (in his late string quartets). He was famous for the skillful orchestration technique that he shows in his orchestral works. First published in 1905 and often considered as his most important organ work, *Adagio in E Major*, follows the English organ tradition and explores the dynamic and timbre possibilities of the instrument. The overall structure of this movement can be seen as a ternary ABA form, where the music very gradually crescendos toward the climax (by the end of B section) and then decrescendos to the end, allowing the music to end in a calm and peaceful mood. This movement is a perfect instance of Bridge’s excellent usage of harmony and understanding of timbre.

J. S. Bach: Two Leipzig Chorales

The conceiving of almost all the *Great 18 Chorale Preludes, BWV 651-668*, also known as the *Leipzig Chorales*, could be traced back to 1710s, when Bach was still in Weimar. However, Bach never returned to these drafts until 1740, after he finished Klavierübung III in Leipzig. This explains

why some of these choral preludes exist in multiple versions. It is clear that Bach was trying to use these 18 chorale preludes to demonstrate and exhaust all possibilities of this form. These 18 chorale preludes include 2 chorale motets, 2 chorale partitas, 5 ornamental chorales, 6 cantus firmus chorales as well as 3 chorale trios. Both *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Her, BWV 662* and *Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland, BWV 658* fall into the category of ornamental chorale. The former, which translates to "Alone to God on high be honour" is a German version of "Gloria in excelsis Deo". The tune is usually attributed to Nikolaus Decius, and had always been an important Lutheran hymn since its first publication in 1531. In this choral prelude, Bach ornaments the original tune to an extreme so that it is barely recognisable. Some of the figures Bach used come from his earlier compositions, such as the Weimar cantatas. The latter, whose title translates to "Come now, Saviour of the heathen", is also based on a traditional Lutheran hymn tune with lyrics written by Martin Luther himself. It features a continuo-like walking base, and widely use imitation in the inner parts, which evokes a sense of eternity.

J. P. Sweelinck: Toccata in C

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck is a transitional figure symbolising the proceeding from Late Renaissance to Early Baroque period. He was born in Deventer, Netherland in 1562 into an organ family. Soon after his birth, his entire family moved to Amsterdam, where he probably spent his entire life, with a few exceptions when he traveled for professional opportunities. He was a very innovative composer, and is considered as one of the first few composers who dedicated to write keyboard music. He was also the first composer to write organ fugues. As one of the virtuosi of his time, he composed a massive amount of toccatas, including this *Toccata in C*, that technically challenges the performers with fast-running 16th note figures, combined with fast parallel intervals and repeated notes. These toccatas were written partly for pedagogical purpose, as an introduction of different figures that a player would frequently encounter during Sweelinck's time, and as a guide that allows students to quickly master them.