



EASTMAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

The Department of Organ, Sacred Music, and Historical Keyboards

and the studio of David Higgs

Derek Remeš, organ

*Tuesday, April 19, 2016 at 7:30pm
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
25 Westminster Road, Rochester NY, 14607*

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| “Prélude” from 3 Pièces, Op. 29, No. 1 | Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937) |
| 1. <i>Allegro maestoso</i> from Sonata in G, Op. 28 | Edward Elgar (1857-1934) |
| “Hymn to the Evening Star,” from <i>Tannhäuser</i> | Richard Wagner (1813-1883)
transcribed by Edwin H. Lemare (1865-1934) |
| Hungarian Dance No. 5 | Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
transcribed by Lemare |
| <i>pause</i> | |
| Prelude and Fugue in C# Minor, BWV 849 | J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
transcribed by Max Reger (1873-1916) |
| Fantaisie in D-flat Major, Op. 101 | Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) |
| “Harmonies du Soir” from Trois Impressions, Op. 72, No. 1 | Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877-1933) |
| Psalm Prelude, Set 2, No. 3 | Herbert Howells (1892-1983) |

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Art

My sincere thanks to David Higgs for his guidance these past four years.

Thank you also to Karl Robson for scheduling practice time, as well as the entire staff of St. Paul's.

Gabriel Pierné succeeded César Franck as organist at Sainte-Clotilde in Paris from 1890 to 1898. He is remembered today primarily as conductor of the Édouard Colonne concert series, where he directed the premiere of Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird* in 1910. Pierné wrote in a variety of genres, but left only a few works for organ. The austere Prelude combines Baroque figuration and French Romantic harmony. An unassuming melodic pattern gradually develops into a roaring tutti with picardy third, leading to the G major tonality of the Elgar sonata which follows.

Elgar's Sonata in G was commissioned in 1895 by Hugh Blair, organist at Worcester Cathedral, for a concert in honor of some visiting Americans. Apparently Elgar wrote the work in just a week, delivered the score only four days before the concert, and Blair made a terrible mess of it at the premiere. Late nineteenth century England was a time when many Victorian industrialists were donating funds for the construction of enormous organs in town halls. The purpose of these instruments was to showcase the organ as a symbol of English technological progress, as well as to enable the public to hear the latest orchestral works in transcription. The Sonata in G, Elgar's only major work for organ, fits squarely in this tradition, since at times it seems like a transcription of an orchestral piece. Cast in sonata form, which employs two contrasting themes—one loud and assertive, the second soft and lyrical—this work shows the influence of German Romantic harmony, especially Wagner.

English organist Edwin Lemare was perhaps the finest player of orchestral transcriptions during his day. He gave a 100-concert tour of the US in 1900-01, which led to a series of appointments, most notably municipal organist of San Francisco from 1917 to 1929. "Hymn to the Evening Star" comes from Wagner's 1845 opera, *Tannhäuser*, which recounts how the title character takes part in the mythical song contest in medieval Warburg. During this aria, Wolfram, who represents pure, as opposed to Tannhäuser's carnal love, sings of Elizabeth. The aria is cast in three sections: the first is ominous, foreshadowing Elizabeth's death; in the second, Wolfram describes her as a star whose light pierces the darkness of death; in the third section, which forms the main torso of the aria, Wolfram describes the transformation of Elizabeth's soul into that of an angel; the coda is a repetition of this melody played by the cello section. The second of Lemare's transcriptions on the program is Brahms's Hungarian Dance no. 5. It comes from a set of 21 dances originally written for piano four hands in 1869, but later arranged for piano solo by Brahms. Supposedly the Hungarian Dances were Brahms's most profitable works. They are reminiscent of Dvorak's Slavonic Dances of 1878 and 1886. I invite you to imagine a gathering which begins in straight-faced sobriety and spirals into unabashed revelry. Certain stop combinations used on this piece imitate the theater organ.

The title page to J.S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier reveals the set's pedagogical intent. Therefore, it would seem the goal of the Prelude in C# minor is to develop expressive cantabile playing. Every bar features either the opening eighth note motive or the

characteristic siciliano rhythm —eventually the two ideas combine in the climax. The

well-known fugue begins in slow values reminiscent of the strict *stile antico*. Later, two countersubjects in faster values join the subject in triple invertible counterpoint. The subject itself, which contains the unusual chromatic leap of the diminished fourth, recalls the chorale *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland* and the so-called “cross motive,” which recalls Christ’s suffering during the crucifixion. Reger’s transcription, however, tells us more about Reger than Bach: slurs, dynamics, tempo changes, octave doublings, and manual changes are all added, serving to “romanticize” the music. Reger even added a tenor voice throughout most of the Prelude, serving to thicken the texture, but apparently he thought the counterpoint in the fugue beyond improvement. Reger conceived of both the prelude and fugue as gradual *crescendi*, creating a sense of continuous forward momentum. The end of the fugue features a climactic *stretto*, or overlapping subject entries, culminating in the fortissimo bass subject entry in double pedal octaves. Like the prelude, the music suddenly fades away, ending with picardy third (like the Pierné), which leads into the D-flat major of the Saint-Saëns.

Saint-Saëns was a child prodigy, making his formal debut at age ten playing piano concertos of Beethoven and Mozart with his own cadenzas. As an encore, he offered to play any of Beethoven’s 32 piano sonatas from memory. Saint-Saëns had enormous impact on French musical culture during his long career as a pianist, organist, composer, teacher, and conductor. His music exhibits neoclassical traits of clarity, balance, and moderation, which situated him in opposition to the more modern Debussy (the two despised each other). Opus 101, Saint-Saëns’s second fantasy for organ, dates from 1895. The first section highlights the organ’s coloristic potential and exploits antiphonal effects. The second section is a fugue in F# minor, the theme of which is transformed into the relative major in the triumphant third section, combined with elements of the first section. This climactic superimposition of two contrasting ideas recalls César Franck’s *Trois Chorals* of 1890, which Saint-Saëns surely knew.

Karg-Elert was a German Francophile who was widely regarded for his compositions for and playing of the harmonium. In 1924 he gave weekly radio recitals on the harmonium in his home, which bolstered his reputation greatly. Though his finances and health were deteriorating, he undertook a US recital tour in 1932, which was variously described as ‘utterly impossible’ and ‘total chaos.’ Karg-Elert even visited Rochester, NY and intended to meet George Eastman, but the encounter was cancelled on account of the latter’s suicide. “*Harmonies du Sour*” (“*Harmonies of the Evening*”), which likely dates from 1909, evokes a lush impressionism no doubt influenced by Karg-Elert’s interest in French music and harmonic dualism, or the belief prevalent in nineteenth-century Germany that major and minor triads are equivalent “mirrored” entities. (He was known to even turn the page upside down to illustrate this point.) I invite you to contemplate the intersections between “*Harmonies du Sour*” and Johann Goethe’s poem, *Selige Sehnsucht*:

Selige Sehnsucht	Holy Longing (trans. Derek Remeš)
Sagt es niemand, nur den Weisen, Weil die Menge gleich verhöhnet: Das Lebendige will ich preisen, Das nach Flammentod sich sehnet.	Tell it to no one, only the wise, Because most will ridicule outright: The truly living I wish to praise, That yearn for a fiery death.
In der Liebesnächte Kühlung, Die dich zeugte, wo du zeugtest, Überfällt dich fremde Fühlung, Wenn die stille Kerze leuchtet.	In the coolness of love's evening, Where you beget and were begotten, A strange feeling comes over you, As the still candle is lit.
Nicht mehr bleibest du umfassen In der Finsternis Beschattung, Und dich reißet neu Verlangen Auf zu höherer Begattung.	No longer are you trapped In the sinister shadowing, And a new desire carries you To a higher lovemaking.
Keine Ferne macht dich schwierig, Kommst geflogen und gebannt, Und zuletzt, des Lichts begierig, Bist du, Schmetterling, verbrannt.	No distance can slow you, You come airborne and spellbound, And at last, eager for the light, Are you, butterfly, burnt up.
Und solange du das nicht hast, Dieses: Stirb und werde! Bist du nur ein trüber Gast Auf der dunklen Erde.	And until you know this, "Die and become!" You're just another troubled guest On the gloomy earth.

Like Elgar, Howells eschewed a career as a professional organist, instead favoring that of composer and pedagogue, serving fifty years as Professor at the Royal College of Music. Howells is known primarily for his church music, and his characteristic style utilizes traditional tonal materials in novel ways. Psalm Prelude Set 2, No. 3 was inspired by Psalm 33, vs. 3:

Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.

The manuscript is dated July 27, 1939. Germany would invade Poland on September 1 of that year, prompting England's entry into WWII. Given that international tensions were rising during this time, I view this work as a message of hope for the country of England. An exuberant opening section with poignant harmonies ends with an assertive (patriotic?) trumpet solo, and gives way to a soft yet menacing middle section with a rearticulated pedal point. A modulatory transition follows, in which the organ's sound is built up again, eventually arriving at the repetition of the initial material. But this recapitulation is a step higher than the original music, perhaps symbolizing a renewed optimism in the face of adversity. The trumpet call returns briefly at the end in a triumphant blaze of sound.