

Andrew Risinger, organ
October 11, 2020 • 4pm

Sonata in A Major, Op. 65, No. 3 Allegro con moto Andante tranquillo	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
“Dies sind die heiligen zehn Geboten” BWV 678	J. S. Bach (1685-1750)
Toccatà in D Minor “Dorian” BWV 538	J. S. Bach
Lotus	Billy Strayhorn (1915-1967) arr. Alec Wyton
Scherzo from <i>Symphony II</i>	Louis Vierne (1877-1937)
Chorale No. 2 in B Minor	César Franck (1822-1890)
Prelude and Fugue in B Major, Op. 7, No. 1	Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)

Andrew Risinger, a native of Texas, holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Organ Performance from Baylor University where he studied with Joyce Jones. He earned a double Master of Music degree in Organ Performance and Choral Conducting from The University of Alabama where he studied organ with J. Warren Hutton and conducting with Sandra Willetts. Mr. Risinger currently serves as Organist and Associate Director of Music of West End United Methodist Church, Nashville, a post he has held since 1995. Mr. Risinger also teaches on the adjunct music faculty of Belmont University. In 2007 he was named Organ Curator for the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville Symphony’s home, which houses the Martin Foundation Organ built by Schoenstein & Co. Also serving as primary organist for the Nashville Symphony, Risinger was the soloist for the new instrument’s inaugural performance with orchestra in September of 2007.

In 1994 Mr. Risinger was awarded second prize in the American Guild of Organists' National Young Artists Competition in Organ Performance, and he is a past winner of the William C. Hall Organ Competition of San Antonio. As a concert artist he has performed throughout the United States including performances at the National Cathedral in Washington D.C., St. Patrick's Cathedral, Trinity Church Copley Square in Boston, and at the East Texas Pipe Organ Festival. Mr. Risinger has also performed as a soloist with the Illinois Symphony as well as the Nashville Symphony. His performances have been heard on National Public Radio broadcasts of *Performance Today* as well as on *Pipedreams*.

Program Notes

Sonata in A Major

Mendelssohn's Opus 65 consists of six sonatas that were considered to be, at the time of their publishing, the most significant collection of organ works following those of J. S. Bach. The third sonata has one large movement (Con moto maestoso) followed by a quiet, meditative Andante. The first movement begins and ends with a regal march which Mendelssohn originally composed for the wedding of his sister, Fanny. The grandiose introduction gives way to a somber fugue in A minor that incorporates the chorale "Aus tiefer not schrei ich zu dir" (Out of the depths I cry to thee). An increasingly driving second fugal section follows, which continues building with intensity until the recapitulation of the opening theme. The gentle Andante tranquillo is often thought to be reminiscent of Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*.

Dies sind die heiligen zehn Geboten

The bulk of Bach's *Clavier Übung III*, composed in 1739, is devoted to settings of German chorales which are part of the Lutheran mass. "Dies sind die heiligen zehn Geboten" (These are the Holy Ten Commandments), BWV 678, is one of the chorale settings that employs the pedal and encompasses a total of five voices. The chorale phrases are heard intermittently in canon in the tenor and alto range while the upper voices and pedal create a gentle and melodic counterpoint giving this piece a pastoral, peaceful character.

Tocatta in D Minor "Dorian"

Composed sometime between 1712 and 1717, Bach's "Dorian" Tocatta is so named because of lacking a B-flat in the key signature. Bearing the influence of the Italian concerto, this piece is relentless with its driving sixteenth-note rhythm that creates a high level of energy throughout. It is one of the few organ compositions in which Bach indicates manual changes. As a result, there is much imitative dialogue between manual divisions of the organ, which often occurs as harmonic sequences over a descending pedal line.

Lotus

This composition is Alec Wyton's organ arrangement of Billy Strayhorn's *Lotus Blossom*. Born in 1915, Strayhorn had a close musical partnership with Duke Ellington joining his band in 1939, and he was best known for writing the tunes *The Lush Life* and *Take the A Train*. When Duke Ellington died in 1974, his funeral was held in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine where Alec Wyton was organist from 1954-74. In making funeral arrangements, Ellington's sister Ruth asked Wyton to improvise on *Lotus Blossom* during communion. Some years later, Ruth requested that Wyton transcribe and publish his improvisation. In 1986, he transcribed the recording and published it in 1987 as *Lotus*.

Scherzo from Symphony II

French organist and composer Louis Vierne studied under other well-known composers such as Franck, Guilmant, and Widor at the Paris Conservatoire and received the prestigious appointment as organist of Notre Dame Cathedral de Paris in 1900. Vierne composed six symphonies for organ as well as many free works. His second Symphony for organ, completed in 1903, received high praise from Claude Debussy with the stunning accolade, "M. Vierne's symphony is truly remarkable. It combines rich musicality with ingenious discoveries in the special sonority of the organ. J.S. Bach, the father of us all, would have been well pleased...." A number of tragedies in Vierne's life (near-blindness, a divorce, professional disappointments, and losing a son and brother to World War I) may be reflected in the anguish heard in some of his works. And yet, there are still shining examples of pure exuberance to be mined from his output as heard in the Scherzo from *Symphony II*. This charming and light-hearted piece makes use of the organ's bright flute stops as well as mellow string stops heard in a melodic pedal line that appears twice.

Chorale in B Minor – César Franck

Franck's Chorale in B Minor is the second in a set of three chorales. These pieces were to be Franck's last major works for organ prior to his death in 1890. The B Minor chorale opens with a somber theme heard in the pedal with octaves answering in the hands as if tolling a bell. As the piece progresses, the theme is repeated in succession, often in the pedal, resulting in a set of continuous variations, somewhat like the baroque form of the passacaglia. Eventually a second theme is introduced, which Franck later combines with the first theme. Prior to a more free, fantasia-like section in the middle of the piece, Franck calms everything with a brief hymn-like tune played on the Vox Humana stop (the "human voice"), which is quite colorful and distinct. After a brief fugal section, tension builds as Franck masterfully combines the first and second themes. The final statement of the opening theme is heard thundering in the pedal, after which Franck concludes with a repeat of the hymn-like tune played on the Vox Humana.

Prelude and Fugue in B Major

Organist and composer, Marcel Dupré was well known for his numerous performance tours many of which brought him to the United States. He studied at the Paris Conservatoire with such noted composers as Alexandre Guilmant, Louis Vierne, and Charles-Marie Widor. Later appointed as Director of the Paris Conservatoire, Dupré also succeeded Widor as titular organist at the renowned Saint-Sulpice church in Paris. He held this post until his death in 1971. One would be hard-pressed to find a piece of organ music with more sparkle and brilliance than Dupré's Prelude and Fugue in B Major. In the Prelude, a rapid toccata figuration in the hands calls to mind a profusion of church bells ringing, not in the least due to the prominence of the fourth interval throughout the harmonies and melodic contours. The bold pedal line not only undergirds the facile toccata pattern but also mimics it at various points throughout the piece. The Fugue, with its rather playful subject, has syncopated rhythms during its episodes that create a jazz-like feel. The recapitulation involves an augmented statement of the theme in the pedal, and the final wind-up brings with it more brilliant exchanges in which the dialogue between hands and feet is reminiscent of similar passages in the Prelude.