

# *Saint Mark's*

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## 2020-21 MUSIC SERIES

*presents*

# **Fritts Organ Concert**

John Stuntebeck, Organist

Friday, January 29, 2021, 7:30 P.M.  
Livestreamed from Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Seattle

## **Program order**

**Selections from *Seven Sketches on Verses from the Psalms* (1934)**

Percy Whitlock (1903 – 1946)

4. Exultemus, Psalm 81: 1-3

*“Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.*

*Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.*

*Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.”*

1. Pastorale, Psalm 23: 1

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”*

**Fanfare and Chorale (2009)**

Calvin Fuller (b. 1943)

**Sonata in D-Major, KV 144**

W.A. Mozart (1756-1791); arr. by Zsigmond Szathmáry

**Variations sur *Ubi Caritas* (2013)**

Denis Bédard (b. 1950)

**Sonata 1, BWV 525**

J.S. Bach (1685 -1750)

*Allegro Moderato*

*Adagio*

*Allegro*

**Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele BWV 654**

J.S. Bach

**Allegro, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement from *Concerto No. 1 in C-Major***

Thomas Arne (1710- 1778)

**Voluntary No. 5 in G-Major**

William Walond (ca. 1725 – 1770)

**Voluntary in D**

John Alcock (1715 – 1806)

**Variations on a Theme of Samuel Scheidt, *Puer natus in Bethlehem* (2005)**

Rebecca Groom te Velde (b. 1956)

- i. *A child is born in Bethlehem*
- ii. *And joy is in Jerusalem*
- iii. *Rejoice, rejoice, sing high, sing low*
- iv. *Benedicamus Domino*
- v. *To thee, O Lord, be glory paid*
- vi. *Thou Son of Mary, mother-maid*
- vii. *To Holy Trinity give praise, With Deo gracias always, Alleluia*



About the Artist

**John Stuntebeck** serves as the Associate Organist at Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral where he leads congregational singing, accompanies the choirs, and offers selections from the organ repertoire as needed for church services throughout the liturgical year. John is passionate about liturgical improvisation and he provides musical creations inspired by the Gospels and the great hymn texts of the ages at many services at St. Mark's. In addition to being a church musician, John is an accomplished organist, pianist and accompanist who has performed in a wide variety of concerts of varying styles throughout the greater Puget Sound. He earned the

degree of Bachelor of Arts from the Ohio State University in Spanish linguistics in 2003 and received his Masters in Music in organ performance in 2009 from the University of Washington, studying with Carole Terry and Mel Butler. As well as being a professional musician, John works full time as a technical project manager at Kaiser Permanente, implementing IT solutions in the patient care setting as well as for supporting staff and functions. When not on the organ bench or in front of a computer screen, John enjoys being outside tending his garden, going on a long-distance run, or continuing his studies of the Spanish and German languages.

## General Notes on Tonight's Program

One might read the specifications of the [Marion Camp Oliver Organ](#), then tonight's Thomsen Chapel program, and wonder if they are congruous with each other. This is precisely the point, and while Paul Fritts and Company's Op. 22 was designed based on seventeenth and eighteenth-century North German organ building principles, most notably those of Arp Schnitger or Andreas Silbermann, this organ should not be reduced to only playing early music. But how does one go about making an organ built with historical techniques applicable to a wider range of musical styles?

A unique aspect of being an organist is that a part of the work in preparing music for worship or performance is centered around adapting it to the specific instrument on which it will be played. All musicians, regardless of instrument, share in an aspect of this because no two instruments are ever exactly alike and each performance's space and requirements are different. However, organists have to make several decisions that determine what it will actually sound like. For example, one might play a piece exclusively on a trumpet-like sound, on a flute-like sound, or on a combination of several different sounds. Each sound choice produces a different effect, not only on the music interpretation itself, but also on the experience for the listener, whether in person or virtually through recordings or livestreaming.

In many modern organ works, composers indicate precisely which sounds to utilize when performing a piece, but often such indications are merely a guide for the organist. For example, a piece could have a solo melodic line that is accompanied, and the composer might indicate that the solo is to be played on an oboe sound. Depending on the organ, an oboe sound may or may not be available, but the organist would be able to choose another suitable sound that highlights the solo melodic line and maintains the integrity of the composition's intent.

For historical organ works, indications on what sounds to be utilized are often not included. Organists have to rely on historical scholarship, accepted norms within the performance community, as well as on "good taste" (this obviously being very subjective).

The bottom line in all of this is that there is no one correct way to perform a piece, and there is always a new experience waiting around the corner for organist and listener alike. The key to performing a variety of musical styles on an organ that might not match precisely the organ for which a particular work was written is in adaptation, i.e. assembling a convincing performance that conveys the essence of the composition while marrying it to the capabilities of the instrument available.

This process of adaptation is something that I utilize each week for worship services in the chapel, and allows for this organ, designed in a historical style, to be relevant for twenty-first century use and in regular Episcopal worship. I have taken this approach to tonight's concert as well, adapting works to the chapel organ that were designed for much larger instruments or instruments with more modern characteristics.

## Additional Information About Composers/Compositions

**Percy William Whitlock** was an early twentieth-century English organist who studied with both Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and Ralph Vaughan Williams, at the Royal College of Music. He was diagnosed with Tuberculosis in 1928 and went completely blind towards the end of his life, but despite all of his health issues and his premature death, he left behind a small output of compositions for solo organ as well as choral and orchestral works.

The two selections played tonight are from his *Seven Sketches on Verses from the Psalms*, published in 1934. These works are particularly well suited for the worship service due to being rooted in scripture, but also due to their brevity and accessibility to listeners, i.e. both pieces are fairly consonant without any extreme dissonance or atonality.

*Exultemus* is in a brisk three (3/4 time) and opens with material sounding like bells ringing or even a brass band playing. This opening material is then expounded upon through many different key changes, but always in a jubilant style, reflecting the Psalm 81 verses referenced.

*Pastorale* contrasts with *Exultemus*, being in a slower three (9/8 time), and written for a solo sound with accompaniment. Again, as in *Exultemus*, the piece begins with a statement of a theme that then moves through various key changes before reprising the opening theme and winding down to a subdued conclusion. A pastorale is a style of musical composition that has been used to depict scenes of rural life, and perhaps in the case of Whitlock's work, is a direct reference to a pastor or a shepherd, reflecting the words from Psalm 23.

**Calvin Fuller** is a Houston, Texas native and currently serves as the organist-choirmaster of St. James Episcopal Church. His composition *Fanfare and Chorale* (in the style of Hermann Schroeder) was published in 2009 as a part of *Volume 2 King of Kings: Organ Music of Black Composers, Past and Present*. The piece begins with a fanfare-like motive that is then followed by a miniature development/episode before returning to the fanfare motive again. There are a total of three statements of the fanfare motive and a subsequent episode before transitioning to a slightly slower section and conclusion.

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** is mainly known for his operas and orchestral music, but he did compose some organ music, the most notable being pieces for mechanical clocks. The piece played today is a transcription of one of the Seventeen Church Sonatas (also known as the Epistle Sonatas). These one-movement, brief sonatas were intended to be played during Mass between the Epistle and the Gospel readings. Composed in early 1774, originally this would have been performed by two violins, double bass, and organ (continuo).

**Denis Bédard** is a Canadian organist and composer who currently serves at Holy Rosary Cathedral in Vancouver, BC. The work played this evening is a set of variations on the plainsong chant *Ubi Caritas*, a chant that is contained in the Episcopal hymnal, *The Hymnal 1982*, #606.

The piece begins with a short introduction that explores the first line of the chant which is then followed by two variations. The first variation contains the entire chant melody with a homophonic accompaniment underneath, and the second solos out an embellished melody over a "wandering" pedal point and a staccato, broken-chord accompaniment. The piece concludes with a dialogue between the manuals (string sounds riffing on the final seven notes of the chant) and the pedal (a solo sound that plays the first phrase of the chant three times).

**Johann Sebastian Bach's** trio sonatas were composed most likely around 1727, when he was serving as Cantor of St. Thomas in Leipzig. Trios up until Bach's time were compositions played by a variety of instrument combinations, but Bach's innovation took this form to the keyboard, supposedly as a learning tool for his eldest son Wilhelm Friedemann (lucky him!). Trio sonatas are wickedly difficult to play as the organist has to perform three completely separate musical lines simultaneously, i.e. the organist has to be a violinist, a violist, and a cellist at the same time. Each line of music has to be perfectly balanced with the other two lines of music, and no line of music takes precedence over another line. Think of this musical form as extreme counterpoint. The Trio Sonata in Eb-Major is in three movements, fast, slow, then fast, with the middle movement exploring C-Minor, and the first and last movements in Eb-Major.

Bach's communion chorale on *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* (literally: adorn yourself, dear soul) is based on the hymn tune by Johann Crüger, #339 in *The Hymnal 1982*. This chorale is a part of the so-called "Great Eighteen," and was composed in the final decade of Bach's life. It is arguably one of the most beautiful chorale-based works Bach ever wrote for the organ. It is four-part counterpoint in a saraband (type of dance) style, with the top most voice being a highly embellished melody accompanied by the other three voices.

The pieces by **Thomas Arne**, **William Walond**, and **John Alcock** all hail from the eighteenth-century, when most English organs lacked pedalboards. At the time, voluntaries written for church worship followed a general set of norms in compositional style as well as in registration, i.e. what sounds to utilize on the organ. Many voluntaries were composed in two parts, the first section being for the diapason, or principal, stops of the organ,

and the second section featuring a solo sound on the organ with accompaniment. The Voluntary Number 5 by Walond precisely matches this form, with an opening, slow section for the diapason sounds followed by a fast section featuring a solo sound (in this instance a cornet). The Voluntary in D by Alcock also follows this format, the first section being reminiscent of a French overture and followed by an imitative fuggetta.

**Rebecca Groom te Velde** is organist at First Presbyterian Church in Stillwater, Oklahoma and has written a variety of compositions for the organ. Her variations are based on material from *Puer natus in Bethlehem* (A Child is born in Bethlehem), which was published in Samuel Scheidt's collection of motets *Cantiones sacrae* (1620). Te Valde's work is noted for winning the 2005 American Guild of Organists Region VII Composition Competition.

The first variation features two flute sounds of the organ, and the theme for the entire piece is clearly stated in the opening moments. In the second variation, the theme is embellished and played in the left hand by a reed sound. The third variation is a canon between the right and left hand which is followed by the fourth, where the melody is heard in segments in the left hand. For the fifth variation, bold sounds are used from the organ to play the homophonic embellishments on the theme. Following this is an intimate sixth variation that solos out the melody with accompaniment before finishing with an extemporization on the theme. The piece concludes with the seventh variation, which builds in sound and movement until the conclusion. In tonight's performance, this final variation utilizes almost all of the stops of the chapel organ, i.e. "full organ."

- John Stuntebeck

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