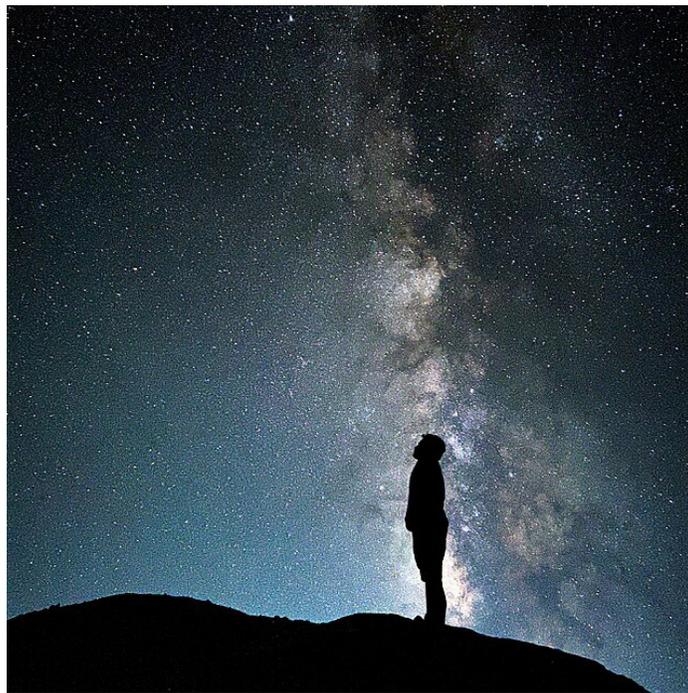


THE SAINT MARK'S  
**MUSIC**  

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**SERIES**  
2025-2026



*Encountering  
the Divine*

Keith Kirchoff, piano

Sunday, February 22, 3:00 pm

In-person at  
Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Seattle

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*Saint Mark's Cathedral acknowledges that we gather on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, who are still here, and we honor with gratitude the land itself and the life of all the Coast Salish tribes.*

# *Encountering the Divine*

Keith Kirchoff, piano

## PROGRAM

- Ave Maria* (1825/1838) Franz Schubert (1797-1828) & Franz Liszt (1811-1886)
- Messa della Domenica* (1635) Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643)  
Toccata avanti la Messa della Domenica  
Canzon dopo l'Epistola  
Recercar dopo il Credo  
Canzon post il Comune
- Fantasie nègre No. 1* (1929) Florence Price (1887-1953)
- Vingt regards su l'Enfant-Jésus* (1944) Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)  
Le baiser de l'enfant-Jésus
- Bénédiction de dieu dans la solitude* (1853) Liszt
- Reflections on Christ of Saint John of the Cross* (2025) Steven Ricks (b. 1969)

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Franz Schubert/Franz Liszt: *Ave Maria* (1825/1838)**

*Ave Maria* was composed by Schubert in 1825 as the sixth song in his Op. 52 song cycle *Sieben Gesänge aus Walter Scotts Fräulein vom See* (Seven Songs from Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake*). Originally titled *Ellens dritter Gesang* (Ellen's Third Song), the song was not, despite popular assumption, a setting of the famous Catholic Prayer. Rather, it is a prayer sung by the character Ellen Douglas (aka the "Lady of the Lake"), asking the Virgin Mary for help as they prepare for battle.

Despite the fact that Schubert never intended this piece for a liturgical setting, the Catholic prayer "Ave Maria" fit so well, that shortly after its publication, the song started to be sung with this text and quickly became more common than the original Walter Scott text.

Liszt was a lifelong devotee of Schubert's work, regularly performing Schubert's work at the piano, and arranging fifty-five of Schubert's songs for solo piano. (Interestingly, despite living near Schubert for many years in Vienna, Liszt claimed to have never met him.) Liszt was also a devout Catholic and ordained priest (he accepted minor holy orders in 1865). He would have heard both versions of Schubert's song – the original German and also the Latin setting – and it is interesting that Liszt chose to name his arrangement of this song after the Latin prayer, not the original title.

Liszt was truly a master at transcriptions, and his arrangements of Schubert's songs are among the best. The original song is strophic: the same melody and accompaniment get repeated three times. Such a direct translation to piano would get dull quickly as we don't have the advantage of text to generate variance to the music. Liszt, therefore, chooses to elaborate upon the accompaniment and texture of the piece: in essence, he is "orchestrating" the accompaniment.

The piece opens fairly similarly to the original, with the melody set in the middle of the piano as if for a tenor. Halfway through the first verse, the range expands with the melody in octaves, and the accompaniment stretches to both higher and lower registers. As the piece progresses, we hear the accompaniment get more and more complex: high cascading arpeg-

gios, thirds and sixths flowing from low to high like waves upon the shore. Yet, despite this increased complexity and virtuosity, these added flourishes aren't just brazen displays of technical prowess intended to "show off." Rather, Liszt treats the piano as an orchestra, understanding how each register brings a different sound and character to the music.

The following is a translation of Schubert's text:

Ave Maria! Maiden mild!  
Listen to a maiden's entreaty  
from this wild unyielding rock  
my prayer shall be wafted to you.  
We shall sleep safely until morning,  
however cruel men may be.  
O Maiden, behold a maiden's cares,  
O Mother, hear a suppliant child!  
Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! Undefined!  
When we sink down upon this rock  
to sleep, and your protection hovers over us,  
the hard rock shall seem soft to us.  
You smile, and the fragrance of roses  
wafts through this musty cavern.  
O Mother, hear a suppliant child,  
O Maiden, a maiden cries to you!  
Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! Purest Maiden!  
Demons of the earth and air,  
banished by the grace of your gaze,  
cannot dwell with us here.  
Let us silently bow to our fate,  
since your holy comfort touches us;  
incline in grace to a maiden,  
to a child that prays for its father.  
Ave Maria!

### **Girolamo Frescobaldi: *Messa Della Domenica* (1635)**

*Messa Della Domenica* is a part of Frescobaldi's (1583-1643) *Fiori Musicali* (Musical Flower): a massive set of five pieces – three sacred masses and two secular capriccios – for solo organ. It is very unusual for its time, as composers from this era seldom wrote (and very rarely published) large-scale masses for solo organ. *Fiori Musicali* had a longstanding impact: it had a significant influence on composers like J. S. Bach, and Austrian composer and theorist Johann Fux highlighted the work in his monumental treatise *Gradus ad parnassum* (published in 1725), which was studied by composers well into the 19th century.

*Messa Della Domenica* is the first mass in the cycle, and includes both original melodies as well as settings of Gregorian chants. In setting this for the piano, I have kept to the original as much as possible, periodically taking liberties when the original asks for techniques unique to the organ that the piano cannot reproduce (sustaining a single note for eight measures, for example). The original score contains no dynamics and few tempo markings, leaving a lot open to personal interpretation.

### **Florence Price: *Fantasia nègre No. 1* (1929)**

Florence Beatrice Smith Price (1887-1953) is the first African-American woman composer to achieve national recognition. Price attended New England Conservatory of Music, graduating in 1906 after three years of study with a soloist's diploma in organ and a teacher's diploma in piano. [Knowing she would not be accepted as a black woman, she claimed to be Mexican.] In the 1920s, her music began to be recognized on a wider scale, and her music was picked up by major publishing houses including Presser, Schirmer, and Carl Fischer. In 1932 Price attracted the attention of prominent conductors when she won first prize in the Wanamaker Music Compositions Contest for her *Symphony in E Minor*, which received its premier in June 1933 with the Chicago Symphony. [bio adapted from G. Schirmer]

Price wrote four Fantasies for piano: numbers 2-4 are settings of original melodies in the style of Negro spirituals, and the first is a setting of the spiritual "Sinner, Please Don't Let This Harvest Pass." It was dedicated to and written for Price's student Margaret Bonds (herself a very accomplished composer and pianist. I highly recommend listening to her song cycles if you are unfamiliar!) The Fantasie is in a neo-romantic style that showcases the piano well, virtuosic from start to finish, yet always in support of the melody which remains clear throughout.

The following is the text of the original spiritual:

Sinner, please don't let this harvest pass;  
Sinner, please don't let this harvest pass;  
Sinner, please don't let this harvest pass,  
and die and lose your soul at last.

I know that my Redeemer lives,  
I know that my Redeemer lives,  
I know that my Redeemer lives,  
Sinner, please don't let this harvest pass.

Sinner, O see the cruel tree,  
Sinner, O see the cruel tree,  
Sinner, O see the cruel tree,  
Where Christ died for you and me.

My God is a mighty man of war,  
My God is a mighty man of war,  
My God is a mighty man of war,  
Sinner, please don't let this harvest pass.

## Olivier Messiaen: *Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus* (1944)

*Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus* (Kiss of the Infant Jesus) is the fifteenth movement of Messiaen's enormous cycle for solo piano, *Vingt Regards sur L'Enfant-Jésus* (Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus). When heard in its entirety, there are very few pieces in all of the piano literature that can match the *Vingt Regards* for not only its great size (over two hours), but also its tight compositional structure and thematic cohesiveness. Three musical themes (or motives) unify the entire cycle: the "Theme of God" (a series of five chords that you will hear throughout *Le baiser*), the "Theme of the Star and the Cross" (a melodic pattern), and the "Theme of Chords" (four chords built on fourths that Messiaen says is intended to represent a "rainbow."). Peter Hill, in his book *Messiaen*, describes it best: "The work's momentum derives from... the way the 'Theme of God' is transformed, with each change marking one of the main staging posts in the theological journey: from God the Father and the Son (nos. 1 and 5), via the convulsive energy of creation and its counterpart in the 'Spirit of Joy' (nos. 6 and 10), to the events of the nativity (nos. 11 and 15) and finally to the glory of the eternal Church (nos. 19 and 20)." [New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005.]

*Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus* is a transcendent and mystical work that tries to capture the wonder and miracle of Christ's birth. It opens with the "Theme of God" in the style of a berceuse (a musical lullaby of repeating patterns that is meant to represent the rocking of a cradle). It is innocent, simple, and sublime. But the power that is Jesus' birth cannot be contained, and the piece cracks open with sheer ecstasy: the "Theme of Chords" is heard representing church bells ringing worldwide.

I cannot think of a better metaphor of the paradox of baby Jesus than this piece: there is nothing more innocent, pure, and vulnerable than an infant. Yet this infant also contains the power of almighty God!

Messiaen included a detailed preface to the cycle, as well as a brief description of each movement. Of *Le baiser*, he writes (translated from French): "At each Communion, the Infant Jesus sleeps with us, close to the gate; then he opens it onto the garden and comes forth in a blaze of light to embrace us..."

## Franz Liszt: *Bénédiction de dieu dans la solitude* (1853)

As a pianist, one of the things that brings me great satisfaction is finding connections between pieces that may seem unrelated. And, at first glance, one might think that of Messiaen's *Le baiser de l'Enfant-Jésus* and Liszt's *Bénédiction de dieu dans la solitude*. Written nearly 100 years apart, Messiaen's work is often grouped with other 20th century modernists (Boulez, Stockhausen, etc), while Liszt is frequently overlooked by non-pianists and far-too-often seen as purely a technical display of pianistic virtuosity. However, I would argue that these two pieces are siblings and almost two sides of the same coin. And, though I have never read any evidence of this, I cannot help but believe that Messiaen was hugely influenced by Liszt's *Bénédiction* when he composed the *Le Baiser*. Both pieces have the same formal structure of three distinct sections (ABA), both are in the key of F# (a key that Liszt always used to represent God or heaven), both have quick, light arpeggios (almost like angel wings) in the RH while the LH plays a simple melody, and both end with – after a long pause – a simple chordal cadence.

*Bénédiction de dieu dans la solitude* (God's Blessing in Solitude) is the third movement of Liszt's 10-movement 90-minute cycle *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (Poetic and Religious Harmonies). The cycle explores humanity's relationship to God: how God's love remains constant throughout our deepest moments of despair (movement four, *Pensée des morts*, which is a setting of Psalm 130 "From the depths I cry to you, O Lord) or unfathomable tragedy (movement seven, *Funerailles*, which is an elegy written in response to the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, an event that claimed the lives of three of Liszt's close friends).

*Bénédiction de dieu dans la solitude* was among Liszt's favorites of his pieces, and he performed it often, even long past he retired from performing as a pianist. In three distinct sections, the piece opens with a simple melody in the key of F# major. The melody builds in a fashion not unlike the Ave Maria that opened this program, exploring the various regions of the piano, using different textures and doublings to develop what is on the surface a very simple melody.

The second section introduces a new theme and is in the key of D major. For many years I struggled with what this section represented: it seemingly has no

relationship to the theme, and it is so simple by comparison. But on further study, I believe that this represents us, humankind. If the first section is the power of heaven, this second is the mundane aspect of earth. The music is “pretty” and pleasant, but simple. There’s some modest conflict in a minor key, but generally it leaves us wanting more.

And we get precisely that when this “theme of humanity” (my term) returns at the very end of the piece. After the third section – which opens with a quotation from movement two (Liszt’s original *Ave Maria*, in the key of B-flat which is meant to symbolize Mary) – we return to the theme of heaven and God that opened the piece. And after a reintroduction to the wonder that is God, Liszt brings back that simple “theme of humanity,” but this time it has changed: no longer in the key of D, it is now in F#, the key of the divine. We have bonded with God, and the music (aka humankind) is better for it.

One last curious aspect of this movement: the final three chords. It’s a simple cadence entirely on offbeats. While a composer would traditionally place the final chords on beats one or three, Liszt places them on two and four. Personally for me, this represents the timelessness, or infinite nature, of God and our continually evolving relationship to the divine. It isn’t as simple as flipping a switch: it’s an ongoing process that continues to change and grow. In fact, in the context of the entire cycle, Liszt doesn’t let us stay in this space of comfort for long: the very next movement in the cycle is the aforementioned setting of Psalm 130.

Like Messiaen 90 years later, Liszt also wrote a preface to the cycle and included the following poem (written by Alphonse de Lamartine, translated from French) before this movement:

Where does this peace come from, O my God?  
Where does this faith come from,  
with which my heart overflows?  
To me who just now, uncertain, agitated,  
And on the waves of doubt with every tossed wind,  
Was looking for the good, the true,  
in the dreams of the wise,  
And the peace in hearts resounding with storms?  
Barely a few days have slipped on my forehead,  
It seems to me that a century and a world have passed,  
And that, separated from them by an immense abyss,  
A new man in me is reborn and begins again.

**Steven Ricks: *Reflections on Christ of Saint John of the Cross* (2025)** Program Notes by the composer

As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, faith in Christ is central to my personal worship and religious practice. The use of the cross, however, in my religious experience is less common; LDS paintings and church buildings rarely make use of the cross, and it hasn’t been typical for LDS members to wear crosses as jewelry, or to “cross” themselves as a physical act. I’ve always been intrigued by depictions of Christ in Western art, especially Medieval and Renaissance paintings, and felt that while such depictions and symbols weren’t used by my church, they still spoke to me...but I was really blown away the first time I saw Salvador Dali’s painting *Christ of St. John of the Cross*. It was included in a curated exhibit at the National Gallery in London in 2000 that I saw with my wife, Laura, and we bought the commemorative book that featured the Dali painting on the cover.

I’ve looked at that painting on the cover of the book and reflected back on seeing it in person many times—Christ depicted almost as a superhero, flying through the air, not nailed to the cross but stuck to it through miraculous means, defying gravity and radiating light in the midst of the darkness surrounding him. Laura and I were visiting Glasgow, Scotland in fall 2024 and happened serendipitously upon the painting again in its permanent home in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. This unexpected encounter seemed timely since pianist Keith Kirchoff had recently invited me to write a piece for him that was inspired by my religious experience, so I decided to use the painting as a point of departure.

As I started to analyze the painting and think about possibly musical reflections and iterations of it, two of its characteristics became particularly influential: the darkness and intensity of the top 2/3 of the painting compared to the serene coastal scene at the bottom; and the energetic image of the cross at its center, created by the wooden cross and body of Christ. I began generating a lot of musical material of various sorts that consisted of very extreme cross motives—melodic patterns that made the shape of the cross by going from high to low and then to two middle points (similar in my mind to crossing oneself). I also used the cross-like pitch patterns to generate transposition levels and keys of musical clips that include snippets of some of the pieces Keith was planning to program

with my piece, along with snippets from the LDS Hymn “In Humility, Our Savior,” which is an original LDS text set to the traditional Welsh tune “Hyfrydol” from the mid-Nineteenth Century. After an energetic and bombastic opening section emblematic of struggle, a middle section that evokes praying again builds and gives way to another climax, which is then followed by a serene ending that features the Hymn tune and which hopefully evokes the placid scene at the bottom of the painting. I think of faith, at least sometimes, as a journey that includes trials, challenges, epiphanies, and hopefully peace.

**Steven L. Ricks** (b. 1969) is described in BBC Music Magazine as a composer “unafraid to tackle big themes.” He creates work that is bold, innovative, ambitious, and diverse, often including strong narrative and theatrical influences. He writes for specific performers and performance situations and works towards unique moments that capitalize on interesting convergences. His music is performed and recorded by several leading artists and ensembles, including counterinduction (NY), New York New Music Ensemble, Canyonlands New Music Ensemble (SLC), Talujon Percussion (NY), Hexnut (Amsterdam, NE), Links Ensemble (Paris, FR), Manhattan String Quartet, Earplay (SF), NOVA Chamber Music Series (SLC), Empyrean Ensemble (SF), NY Metropolitan Opera soprano Jennifer Welch-Babidge, pianist Keith Kirchoff, guitarist Dan Lippel, flutist Carlton Vickers, and violinist Curtis Macomber.

For the past 15+ years Ricks has also been active as a performer on trombone and laptop (live electronics), most notably with colleague Christian Asplund through the RICKSPLUND free-improvisation duo. Ricks has performed and recorded with RICKSPLUND and other artists, including Douglas Ewart, Vinny Golia, Anne La Berge, Ron Coulter, and Oğuz Büyükerberber, and has performed at several ISIM conferences, MOXsonic, and creative music venues including Elastic Arts in Chicago and STEIM in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Ricks has received commissions and awards from the Fromm Music Foundation, the Barlow Endowment, SCI, and Center for Latter-day Saint Arts, among others, including a 2023 Barlow Endowment LDS Commission to write a new work for contrabass flute and electronics for Ned McGowan that was premiered at Splendor Amsterdam in December 2024. His music

has been featured at multiple national and international conferences, festivals, and symposia, including ICMC, SEAMUS, NYCMEF, ISIM, KISS (Kyma International Sound Symposium), Third Practice, Festival of New American Music, and TRANSIT (Leuven, BE). Recordings of his music appear on multiple labels, including Bridge Records, New Focus Recordings, Neuma Records, Albany Records, pfMENTUM, Vox Novus, TryTone, and Comprovis Records.

Ricks received degrees in music composition from Brigham Young University (BM), the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (MM), the University of Utah (PhD), and a Certificate in Advanced Musical Studies (CAMS) from King’s College London. He is a professor in the BYU School of Music where he teaches music theory and composition. He is former BYU School of Music Composition and Theory Division Coordinator (2016-24), former Editor of the Newsletter for the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States (2012-19), and was director of the BYU Electronic Music Studio for 20 years (2001-2021).

*Program notes by Keith Kirchoff, unless otherwise noted*

## ABOUT THE ARTIST



Described as a “virtuosic tour de force” whose playing is “energetic, precise, (and) sensitive,” **Keith Kirchoff** is a pianist, composer, conductor, concert curator, and teacher. A strong advocate for living composers, Kirchoff is committed to fostering new audiences for contemporary music and giving a voice to emerging composers.

Kirchoff is the co-founder and President of SPLICE Music: one of the United States’ largest programs dedicated to the performance, creation, and development of music for performers and electronics. As a part of SPLICE, he serves as Director of Performance Studies for SPLICE Institute, a weeklong summer program held at Western Michigan University, Director of SPLICE Festival, an annual conference held in collaboration with different universities, and the pianist of SPLICE Ensemble.

As a pianist, Kirchoff has played throughout the United States as well as major cities throughout Italy, New Zealand, Australia, England, Canada, Belgium, Mexico, China, and The Netherlands. He has been a featured soloist in many music festivals including the Festival de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville, Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea, the Society for Electro- Acoustic Music in the United States (SEAMUS), the Oregon Festival of American Music, and the International Computer Music Conference (ICMC). In addition to the SPLICE Ensemble, he is the pianist in the Boston-based Hinge Quartet, and as a soloist and ensemble musician, has commissioned several dozen composers and premiered hundreds of new works, including the Boston premiere of Charles Ives’ *Emerson Concerto*.

Described as “hyperactive,” Kirchoff’s compositions have been presented throughout the United States, Canada, England, Turkey, Holland, Mexico, New Zealand, Aus-

tralia, and Germany. He has received commissions from numerous ensembles and soloists including Transient Canvas, Hinge Quartet, Ensemble mise-en, pianists Shiau-uen Ding and Kai Schumacher, baritone Nathan Kreuger, and Telling Stories Music.

The winner of the 2006 Steinway Society Piano Competition and the 2005 John Cage Award, Kirchoff was named the 2011 “Distinguished Scholar” by the Seabee Memorial Scholarship Association. He has also received composing grants from MetLife Meet the Composer and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts.

Kirchoff has served as Vice President of SEAMUS and is the founder and Artistic Director of Original Gravity: a Boston-based concert series featuring the music of local composers and pairs that music with locally brewed beer.

Kirchoff’s primary teachers include Dean Kramer, Stephen Drury, and Paul Wirth. He received his Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Oregon in 2003 graduating summa cum laude and then received his Master of Music degree at New England Conservatory in 2005. He has also studied composition with Michael Gandolfi and Jeffrey Stolet, and conducting with Richard Hoenich. In addition to his recordings on his independent label Thinking outLOUD Records, Kirchoff has released recordings on the New World, Kairos, Ravello, Parma, Albany, SEAMUS, New Focus, Tantara, and Zerx labels.

Kirchoff lives in Rhode Island and is on faculty at Boston Conservatory, serves as the Chair of the Keyboard Department at Concord Conservatory of Music, is the Music Director at First Parish in Brookline, and teaches composition at Connecticut College. He is an avid homebrewer and has published several articles on the topic.

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*O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß*, BWV 622 by J. S. Bach

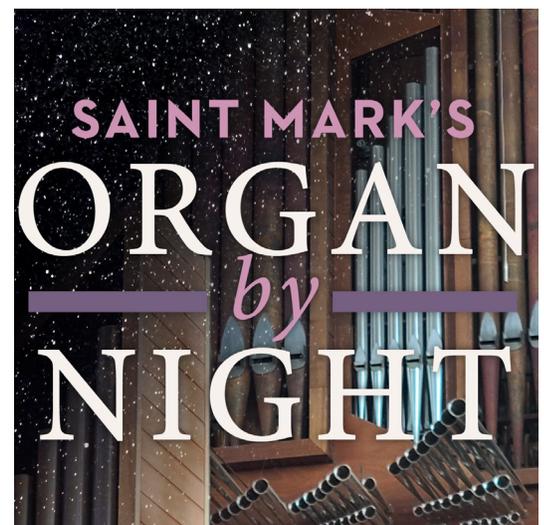
*Præludium in C* by George Böhm

Tacoma native **Kyle Haugen** is cantor at Queen Anne Lutheran Church, serving as organist, director of parish ensembles, and coordinator of concerts and arts outreach. He is also the artistic director and conductor of Northwest Repertory Singers and sings as a freelance choral tenor. Kyle directed high school-aged ensembles with Tacoma Youth Chorus and led a tour to England and Ireland. During several years living in Boston, he was the tenor soloist for the premiere of Daniel Pinkham's *Missa Brevis* and contributed to two recordings of Renaissance choral works as a member of the Choir of the Church of the Advent (Arsis Audio). Kyle is a published composer of choral music (Augsburg Fortress, Pavane), and his compositions have been performed, recorded, and broadcast across the United States since 2001.

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