

Rhonda Sider Edgington

Rondo, from *Twelve Short Pieces, Op. 43*

Rachel Laurin
(b. 1961)

Concerto in D Minor, BWV 596

Johann Sebastian Bach

After the Concerto in D minor, Op. 3, Nr. 11 by Antonio Vivaldi

(1685-1750)

I. [Moderato]

II. Grave

III. Fuga

IV. Largo e spiccato

V. [Allegro]

Church Bells Beyond the Stars (12013)

Cecilia McDowall
(b. 1951)

Praeludium in d

Vincent Lübeck
(1654-1740)

from Pastoral Suite: prayers for organ (2007)

Patricia Van Ness
(b. 1951)

You lead me beside the still waters
You have put into my heart a marvelous love
Our life, our sweetness, and our hope

In dich hab' ich gehoffet, Herr

Franz Tunder
(1614-1667)

Meditation on "Amazing Grace" (1996)

Margaret Sandresky
(b. 1921)

Vater unser im Himmelreich, BuxWV 219

Dieterich Buxtehude
(1637-1707)

**Theme and Variations: a ballad of sorts
from *Brevities* (2013)**

Gwyneth Walker
(b. 1947)

Fugue in E-flat Major (“St. Anne”), BWV 552

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 - 1750)

Organist Rhonda Sider Edgington is a creative and eclectic musician, with a diverse repertoire and wide range of musical interests. Often commended for her innovative programming, imaginative use of registrations, and exciting playing, Rhonda feels equally at home playing small mechanical-action instruments as well as large Romantic or symphonic-style organs.

Having spent seven years working and studying in Bremen, Germany (originally with a Fulbright scholarship to study with Prof. Harald Vogel), Rhonda has acquired an extensive repertoire, from Sweelinck and the music of 17th-century Northern Germany, through music of 19th- and 20th-century France, to the music of today. She has played recitals at venues such as St. Thomas Fifth Avenue in New York City, Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis, St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral in Buffalo, and Fourth Presbyterian and Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago, as well as on many historic Arp Schnitger organs in Germany, such as those in Norden, Grasberg, and Weener. She has played at five national conventions of the Organ Historical Society and a regional convention of the American Guild of Organists. She has also been heard on the nationally syndicated radio program “Pipedreams.”

Rhonda has worked as a church musician since her student days, and has held jobs in almost every major denomination here in the states, as well as working as a church musician in Germany. As organ teacher, Rhonda was Assistant Professor at Concordia University, River Forest (IL), and Interim Professor of Organ at Houghton College (NY), and now teaches privately. She also enjoys playing the harpsichord, piano, and carillon, and is an avid chamber musician.

Rhonda studied in Germany with Harald Vogel, Hans-Ola Ericsson, and Hans Davidsson, and in the U.S. with Larry Smith, Marilyn Keiser, John Chappell Stowe, Edward Zimmerman, and her father Ronald Sider. She has a Master’s degree in Organ from Indiana University, a Bachelor’s degree in Piano from Wheaton College (IL), and a Diploma in Organ Performance from the Hochschule für Künste/ University of the Arts in Bremen, Germany, where she was awarded the highest possible grade for her graduation recitals. She helped lead an educational tour for the European chapter of the American Guild of Organists in 2011 to visit organs of Northern Germany, and is currently Dean of the Holland, MI chapter of the AGO.

Rhonda lives with her family in Holland, Michigan, where she is the organist at Hope Church, a staff accompanist at Hope College, Seminary Organist at Western Seminary, and maintains a private studio, while continuing to perform regularly in the U.S. and abroad. Her website <http://rhonda.edgington.info> contains photos and recordings of some of her favorite pipe organs.

Program Notes – by Rhonda Edgington

Rachel Laurin is a French-Canadian organist and composer, who has written some significant music in the last decades for the organ. An important proponent of new music in Canada, she has taught compositions and received awards for her organ playing, and compositions. She was born in St. Benoit, Quebec, has held important church music positions in Montreal and Ottawa, and has been an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Center since 1989. She now lives in Ottawa. Rondo is from her two-volume collection *Twelve Short Pieces for Organ*. Each piece in this collection is dedicated to a different organist or musician. This particular movement is dedicated to John Morabito, a young American organist who has studied with Laurin.

Bach took Concerto Number 3 that Vivaldi originally composed as a concerto grosso for two solo violins, as well as strings and continuo, and arranged it for solo organ. In the opening movement, we can hear the two solo violins, against a plucked string bass accompaniment. The second movement is only three measure long – these powerful, dramatic harmonies lead us into the third movement, a fugue. The fourth movement contains a lyrical and beautiful singing melody, over accompanying chords, and in the final movement, the organist must quickly jump back and forth between manuals, showing aurally and visibly the contrast between the small group of solo instruments, and the larger ensemble.

Born in London, Cecilia McDowall has been described by the International Record Review as having 'a communicative gift that is very rare in modern music'. Often inspired by extra-musical influences, her writing combines a rhythmic vitality with expressive lyricism 'which is, at times, intensely moving'. *Church bells beyond the stars* was commissioned by the Edinburgh Society of Organists and was first performed by John Kitchen on 18 May, 2013, at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh. This is the third in a trilogy of organ works inspired by the metaphysical poet, George Herbert. The first *Sounding heaven and earth*, the third, *Church bells beyond the stars*, draw their titles from George Herbert's *Prayer (I)*. The second of the group, *Sacred and hallowed fire*, takes its inspiration from the sequence of poems entitled *The Temple*.

Prayer (I) by [George Herbert](#) (1593–1633)

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth

Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days world transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;

Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,

Exalted manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,

Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices; something understood.

Lübeck was organist in the German towns of Stade and later Hamburg, playing at St. Cosmae, and St. Nicolai on some of the great organs of the day, both built by Arp Schnitger – the master organ builder of the North German 17th century. In his great Praeludiums, we see all the characteristics of the North German style – long and virtuosic pedal solos (such as this praeludium contains in the first two pages), contrasting sections, containing one or more fugues, as well as free and improvisatory sections, grand stylistic architecture, and a dramatic flair. We will hear a contrast of registers and sounds, as well as varying figures and motives in this concluding piece, along with one of the registers of the organ not yet heard this afternoon.

Composer, violinist, and poet Patricia Van Ness draws upon elements of medieval and Renaissance music to create a signature voice that has been hailed by musicians, audiences and critics. She has been called a modern-day Hildegard von Bingen, with her ability to compose music possessing "tremendous depth and beauty," "both ancient and new." Through all her compositions, musical and written, she professes to continue an ongoing exploration into the interactions of beauty and the divine, and their bearing on the human spirit.

I will be playing three of the "Seven Prayers" that make up the Pastoral Suite. The Suite is dedicated to Peter Sykes, music director at First Church Congregational, in Cambridge, MA, in honor of his 20th anniversary at this position, the church where Van Ness is Staff Composer. Each of the movements uses a text, which Van Ness lists in the score.

- "You lead me beside the still waters" uses Psalm 23 and employs a call-and-response texture, which could perhaps be depicting a sheep following a shepherd.

- "You have put into my heart a marvelous love" is a translation of Psalm 16 from the Liturgy of the Hours, and one of the powerful and strong settings from this set.

- "Our life, our sweetness, and our hope", comes from the "Liturgy of the Hours", which refers to the Divine Office, the daily prayers, consisting of psalms, readings, and hymns, which is chanted eight times daily in the monastic tradition.

Tunder has written a beautiful settings of the chorale In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr. The English translation included here is a literal one, so I include also the German text.

In dich hab' ich gehoffet, Herr,
Hilf, daß ich nicht zuschanden werd'
Noch ewiglich zu Spotte!
Das bitt' ich dich, erhalte mich
In deiner Treu', mein Gotte!

In you I have placed my hope, Lord,
help, so that I may not be ruined
or forever despised.
I ask this of you, uphold me
in your love, my God.

The composer opens with a scalar movement from the low registers to high – perhaps evoking the sound of a plaintive cry. I have chosen with my interpretation to vary the registers occasionally, when the section and/or texture changes – listen for the differing solo sounds, and also the use of echo techniques, as evidenced by quick leaps from one manual to another.

Margaret Sandresky is an organist, composer, and teacher. After studying composition at Salem College, and the Eastman school of Music, she received a Fulbright grant (like Rhonda did!) in 1955 to study organ, harpsichord, and composition in Germany. The following year, she married another composer, and raised their three children, before returning to composing at age 50. She has taught at Oberlin College, University of the Arts, and Salem College and is the fourth generation of professional women musicians in her family. She grew up in Winston-Salem, NC, where her father was a professor of music at Salem College, and she was surrounded by the Moravian culture and music. She still lives in Winston-Salem, and has composed a large body of work for the organ. "When I sit down to play the organ," she says, "it is another way of speaking."

Buxtehude has written many settings of German chorales of his day – some, like this one, are shorter and simple, taking the listener through just one repetition of the melody. Others are elaborate fantasies, using text painting to depict many different verses of the hymn. This text is the well-known Vater unser (Our Father, who art in heaven). Buxtehude sets this as a beautiful, yet also mournful and pleading cry – using chromaticism in the melody voice, which as the piece nears the end, becomes more dramatic in range and figurations. Here is one translator's version of this hymn text.

Our Father, who from heaven above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity.
Teach us no thoughtless words to say
But from our inmost hearts to pray.

Gwyenth Walker was born in Connecticut, and later lived for 30 years on a dairy farm in Vermont. Her music is known for its energy, reverence, and humor, as well as its clear influences from folk and rock genres. It has been described as, “always accessible, although never simplistic”. A former professor of composition at Oberlin College, she left that position to pursue full-time composing in 1982, and now divides her time between her childhood home in Connecticut, Florida, and Vermont (where she is a proud citizen, and received the lifetime achievement award from the Vermont Arts Council in 2000). Brevities is a four movement work: I. Sounds, II. Tune, III. Theme and Variations, and IV. Play. Bach took Concerto Number 3 that Vivaldi originally composed as a concerto grosso for two solo violins, as well as strings and continuo, and arranged it for solo organ. In the opening movement, we can hear the two solo violins, against a plucked string bass accompaniment. The second movement is only three measure long – these powerful, dramatic harmonies lead us into the third movement, a fugue. The fourth movement contains a lyrical and beautiful singing melody, over accompanying chords, and in the final movement, the organist must quickly jump back and forth between manuals, showing aurally and visibly the contrast between the small group of solo instruments, and the larger ensemble.

Bach's well-known E-flat Major fugue is nicknamed the St. Anne because the opening of the fugue subject is the same as the first seven notes of the hymn known as St. Anne (often sung to the text O God, our Help in Ages Past.) The piece is made up of three distinct sections, the first being stately and slow-moving, the second full of whirling eighth notes, and the final section rather dance-like. \