

Rhonda Sider Edgington
Everyone Dance! - Music at the Meetinghouse
May 16, 2014

From Twelve Short Pieces, Op. 43

Rachel Laurin
(b. 1961)

Rondo
Moto Perpetuo
Intermezzo
"Triangle" Fugue

Sonata in One Movement (on "Kalenda Maya") (1982)

Libby Larsen
(b. 1950)

Church bells beyond the stars (2013)

Cecilia McDowall
(b. 1951)

Pastoral Suite: prayers for organ (2007)

Patricia Van Ness
(b. 1951)

You lead me beside the still waters
From the farthest heavens
Amen, From the farthest heavens
As the morning dawns
Our life, our sweetness, and our hope
You have put into my heart a marvelous love

Moto Ostinato *from Sunday Music* (1958)

Petr Eben
(1929-2007)

~Intermission~

From Animal Parade

Iain Farrington
(b. 1977)

Barrel Organ Monkey
Blue Whale
Hippopotamus

Angels of Forgetfulness (1984)

Barry Jordan
(b.1957)

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

Gwyenth Walker
(b. 1947)

Prelude and Recessional on Amazing Grace (2006)

Adolphus Hailstork
(b. 1941)

Meditation on “Amazing Grace” (1996)

Margaret Sandresky
(b. 1921)

From Five Dances (1982)

At the Ballet

Everyone Dance!

Calvin Hampton
(1938-1984)

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 held church jobs in almost every major denomination here in the states, and worked as a church musician in Germany. She has been 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, and John Chappell Stowe. 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 in Bremen, Germany. 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 Sider Edgington

Rachel Laurin is a French-Canadian organist and composer, who has written significant repertoire 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. These pieces are from her two-volume collection *Twelve Short Pieces for Organ*. Each piece in this collection is dedicated to a different organist or musician who has a connection to Laurin or the Canadian music scene.

Libby Larsen is one of America's most prolific and performed living composers. She has won a Grammy, written over 500 works spanning virtually every genre, and is sought after for commissions by artists and orchestras around the world. Her music has been praised for its “dynamic, deeply inspired, and vigorous contemporary American spirit”. Originally from Delaware, Larsen now lives in Minnesota. She writes about this piece:

The melody “Kalenda Maya” (The Month of May) is the earliest known example of an “estampie,” an instrumental form of the 13th and 14th centuries. Troubadour poet Raimbaut de Vaqueiras put words to this wildly popular tune to create the song which remains with us 800 years later. This is a song of courtly love – desire held captive by courtly convention. Its melody captures the insistence and persistence of desire. I was 32 when I composed the Sonata, and it was May in Minnesota. What could be a better inspiration than this to compose a work for organ on the melody “Kalenda Maya”.

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.

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 six 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 is based on a text, listed below.

--"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.

--"From the farthest heavens" is written in a hymn-like texture, and is headed by a poem Van Ness wrote, which can be sung to this simple chordal melody, like a hymn.

From the farthest heavens, from oceans' deep, creation sings your praises.

Chant and glorious antiphon are calling and responding endlessly.

Blessing, love, and honor, and fealty, to you our font, or radiance.

-- "Amen, From the farthest heavens" – is a kind of postscript for the previous movement, intended to be played directly after it, and with these instructions for the performer - "Bagpipe-like".

--"As the morning dawns" is another hymn-like setting, headed with this poem by Van Ness.

As the morning dawns, and as evening shadows gather,

As pools of rain renew the earth, so faithful are you, God.

As the flowers return from the frozen earth in winter,

As birds return from far lands, so faithful are you, God. Amen.

--"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. This is a beautiful, lyrical movement.

-- "You have put into my heart a marvelous love" is a translation of Psalm 16 from the Liturgy of the Hours. This movement is made up of three sections – the outer sections being powerful, majestic-sounding swaths of sound and harmonic changes.

Czech composer **PETR EBEN's** "Moto Ostinato" from *Musica dominicalis* or "Sunday Music" from 1958 represents the third movement of the four-part work, consisting also of two Fantasias and a Finale. With repeated rhythmic motion representing a battleground between good and evil, the first six-bar "Evil" theme appears in triple meter built upon minor thirds – mostly ascending as if coming from below. Later, the second, "Good" theme descends as if coming from above in a quicker more lively gesture. As the piece develops, Evil is depicted in many forms and keys, overwhelming the simpler Good. Evil's improvisatory style is said to derive from a New Testament story in both Mark and Luke about a possessed man who called himself "Legion, because we are many."

British organist, pianist, arranger and composer **Iain Farrington** has written much music in jazz idioms, and his collection of animal-themed pieces, *Animal Parade* – patterned after the Carnival of the

Animals - consists of twelve short movements, each based on a wide variety of animals, from Piranhas to Giraffes to Cheetahs. Heard today will be the circus-like Barrel organ monkey, the beautiful, melodious, and almost melancholy Blue Whale, and the humorous Hippopotamus.

Barry Jordan was born in South Africa, where he studied organ performance and composition in university, worked as a music teacher, and played clarinet as alternate military service in the band of the South African Police. He moved to Europe in 1986, originally with scholarships to study organ and composition in Vienna, and later took cathedral positions in Germany. He has been organist and director of music at the Cathedral in Magdeburg, Germany since 1994, and performs regularly throughout Europe. Angels of Forgetfulness was originally written as a competition piece for the South African Organ Festival, an organ work to honor the three tercentennial composers of 1985 - Handel, Bach, and Scarlatti. Taken from a three movement work, entitled One Each, this movement was inspired by Scarlatti.

The title of this movement refers to a Hasidic story about the value of forgetfulness in human experience. Rabbi Baruch of Mezbish, the grandson of Baal Shem, the founder of Hasidism, was asked why God created forgetfulness. He replied that if there were no forgetting, human beings would think incessantly about their death and they wouldn't do anything, not build a house or learn anything difficult or launch an enterprise. So one Angel teaches the future child - instructing the soul before birth - in such a way that it would forget nothing, and a second Angel teaches the soul of the child how to forget. So there is an Angel of Memory and an Angel of Forgetfulness.

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.

Adolphus Hailstork is an African- American composer who has written in a wide variety of genres, from organ to chamber music to opera and orchestral works. He received his doctorate in composition from Michigan State University, and his works have been performed nationally since the 70's. His orchestral works have been commissioned, preformed, and recorded by major orchestras such as the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, and the Philadelphia Orchestra. His organ works tend towards hymn-based, small- form pieces that are practical for church musicians, as well as being artfully crafted, and interesting to the listener. He is Professor of Music at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. In an interview, the composer said, " About ten years ago, I started taking organ lessons again with a colleague on Old Dominion's staff, and really realized that was the instrument I should have stayed with... because of the sustained sounds and the kind of rich textures you can get on the organ." He says of his own music, "It's always lyrical, tonal, narrative, dramatic, and propulsive."

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."

Calvin Hampton was renowned as an organist and composer for organ. The late Eric Routley, an authority on church music, cited Hampton as "the greatest living composer of hymn tunes." . Born in Kittanning, Pennsylvania and raised in Ravenna, Ohio, Hampton was a resident of New York City from 1963 until his death from AIDS in 1984. Hampton was a distinguished recitalist, specializing in 19th and 20th century repertoire. He was famous for his weekly Friday Midnight concerts at Calvary Church in New York City, which he offered from 1974 to 1983.

Hampton's inspiration for the Five Dances was a piece by Stravinsky, Five Easy Pieces for Piano Duet, in which each movement consisted of an ostinato rhythm coupled with a simple tune. He used this same pattern for Five Dances – At the Ballet is a quiet and lyrical movement, with the high-pitched melody played in the pedals. Everyone Dance! is the final piece in the set.