

MUSIC AT ST. PHILIP  SUMMER SEASON

PRESENTS

2018 SUMMER ORGAN CONCERTS

PROGRAM No. 1

Patrick Parker

Music of Bach — the chorale partitas



SUNDAY | JUNE 24, 2018 | 2:00 p.m.

St. Philip Presbyterian Church ♦ 4807 San Felipe Street ♦ Houston, Texas

About Today's Program

This afternoon's program features music of the young Bach, when he was still primarily a church organist. The concert is in three sections of the liturgical year, with each section beginning with a "free work" (not on a chorale-hymn tune) and then a chorale partita.

The rarely-heard *Alla breve in D major* BWV 589 opens the program. This work probably dates from the early part of Bach's Weimar years (1708-1717), when he was in the service of the Duke of Sachsen-Weimar as court organist. The glorious main theme, which foreshadows later choral melodies in the *B Minor Mass*, is heard initially in the soprano and repeated throughout the work in a style of counterpoint normally heard in Bach's choral works.

The *Canonic Variations* BWV 769 on the chorale we know as "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" are admittedly not early works, but form a set of variations prepared as a showpiece for Bach's entry as the fourteenth member of Mizler's Music Society in Leipzig in 1747, but inspired by the chorale partitas Bach wrote in his twenties. Much has been said about the contrapuntal complexity of the work, but a more accessible way to experience the piece is to focus on the way Bach paints a picture of the Nativity scene in the variations. The first variation depicts the flight of the angels through the descending manual motive while the pedal plays the melody. The second variation depicts the light of the star the Magi followed. The third variation, which builds in intensity as Bach employs various canonic techniques, describes the Christ Child as the hope and joy of a broken world. The fourth variation, intimate and tender, expresses loving gazes from the mother Mary onto her child. The final movement depicts the shepherds of the nativity, with the pastoral oboe being used. This set of variations, often considered an esoteric exercise in counterpoint or an impossible technical showpiece, is neither; it is a work of art, expressing joy, intimacy, hope, and most of all, the Light within us all.

Bach's *Fantasia in C major* BWV 570 is an early work, probably composed sometime during the composer's tenure as organist in the city of Arnstadt (1703-1706). It is one of the few Bach organ fantasias/preludes that is not paired with a concluding fugue, a convention he became fond of upon his move to Weimar in 1708. Both harmonic surprises and a general trend of rhythmic motion — spacious opening rhythms gradually growing more dense and active as the note values grow smaller and the motivic imitation accelerates — foreshadow stylistic hallmarks of Bach's mature keyboard works.

An undeservedly unknown portion of Bach's repertoire are the chorale partitas, including *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* BWV 766. The genre originated from the secular folk tune variation genre in Spain and Holland; when German organists studied with Sweelinck in Amsterdam, they brought the form back to Germany and applied it to sacred chorales. The partitas of Bach are influenced by Georg Böhm, who wrote many variation works for organ and was Bach's teacher at the Michaelisschule in Lüneburg. The text of this Epiphany chorale is

*Christ, you who are the bright day,
before you the night may not endure,
you illumine us from the Father
and are the preacher of light.*

The partita begins with a simple harmonization of the chorale melody which leads to a two-part variation in which the accompaniment creates a weaving, flowing "flicker" of light against the melody. The next two dance-like variations increase in energy, leading to a more subdued fifth variation. The sixth variation is a gigue dance, creating a moment of joy before the serious ending of the seventh variation, which has the melody in the pedal against a thick four-voice manual accompaniment, a new development in the partita genre.

Bach's *Canzona in d minor* BWV 588 is highly influenced by the canzoni of Frescobaldi. In his early years, Bach studied forms and styles of composers of all nationalities, and his status as the pinnacle of Western art music lies on his synthesis of various national styles in his later years. This canzona, like the canzoni of Frescobaldi is in two sections, both dark and somber, both reminiscent of Bach's better-known Art of the Fugue cycle. This piece, somber and serious, quiet but powerful, simple in its complexity, creates an atmosphere taking the listener to a meditative place.

Bach's partita on the chorale *Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig* BWV 768 is an epic meditation on the Passion and Death of Christ. The work begins and ends with a statement of the chorale, a sort of objective narration that frames the emotion of the Passion. After the opening chorale, a two-part French-style variation brings us into an inner world

of contemplation. The next four variations alter between comfort and tension, depicting the struggle Jesus had in accepting his coming suffering. The seventh variation is a gigue, which takes us away from the inner turmoil of Jesus' anxiety toward acceptance of what is to come, and sets the stage for the ensuing drama of the coming variations. From this point forward, the pedal is employed (it was not previously heard in the more introverted variations), marking a completely new way of writing for the partita genre. The eighth variation is a trio with the melody in the pedal while the two hands play on separate manuals in dialogue; this creates the drama of the betrayal by his disciple and the ensuing trial, rejection and scorn. The next variation, a texture and effect not replicated or heard anywhere else in Bach's organ output, is a sort of whirling dervish representing the overwhelming emotion that even God in human form could not escape. The ninth variation represents the anger and scorn of the crowd, another trio with the melody in the pedal. The tenth variation stops us in our tracks. We are removed from time. We hear a comforting sarabande (a slow court dance), employing the most beautiful stops of the organ, with two solo sounds against an accompaniment. Jesus has accepted his suffering. This variation alludes to the thief asking for mercy, for his loved ones weeping at the cross, for Jesus expressing forgiveness to his perpetrators in the hour of his death. It is a statement of death as a welcome process not to be feared. The partita ends with a massive five-voice reiteration of the chorale — we start as we began — hearing the most powerful sounds of the organ.

— Patrick Parker © 2018

About Patrick Parker

Patrick Parker “steals the show by demonstrating his formidable prowess as an organist” (*Early Music America*) and was recognized in *The Diapason's* Class of 2017 “Twenty Under Thirty” — artists setting the pace for the next generation of organ and church music. Patrick currently serves at Covenant Church in Houston's Museum District, where he plays the 1893 Hook and Hastings organ while pursuing a degree at University of Houston's Graduate College of Social Work. This afternoon marks his sixth concert at St. Philip since moving to Houston in 2012.

Patrick has enjoyed a rich and varied concert career throughout the United States and Europe. He has performed as soloist with various regional and baroque orchestras throughout the United States and appeared at major festivals including Texas Music Festival, Piccolo Spoleto, American Bach Soloists, Ars Lyrica Houston, and Houston Early Music Festival. Patrick has performed at major churches and cathedrals throughout the world, including Cathédrale Notre-Dame and La Madeleine in Paris, Wells Cathedral, Amsterdam's New Church, Leipzig's St. Michael and Church of the Resurrection, New York City's Cathedral of St. John the Divine and St. Thomas Fifth Avenue, cathedrals in Atlanta, Charleston, Cleveland, and Houston, and important parishes in Austin, Dallas, Memphis, New Orleans, Tulsa, Richmond, San Antonio, and other metropolitan areas.

A Wagnerian at heart, Patrick's concert repertoire spans German music from J.S. Bach to the early twentieth century. He has had the privilege of performing concert series of the complete works of Bach, Brahms, van Eijken, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Reincken. In 2016, Patrick began a five-year project of performing the complete organ works of Rheinberger in major venues in the United States and abroad.

Patrick began studying organ at University of North Carolina in Greensboro and at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and did post-doctoral study at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Houston, where he was a Bach Scholar, an exchange student with the University of Leipzig for six months, and organist and harpsichordist for the Texas Music Festival, with which he can be heard on two commercial recordings — Strauss' Eine Alpinesinfonie and Respighi's Roman Trilogy. His doctoral research culminated in the document *Aspects of Time in Robert Schumann's Six Fugues on the Name of Bach*, op. 60.

Patrick was founding Artistic Director of Houston Baroque, which was featured in the Houston Chronicle and performed over twenty different programs in three seasons throughout Houston. The *British Organists' Review* commented that Houston Baroque's debut album *My Soul Sees and Hears!* is “an exuberant album . . . joyous and often beautiful from start to finish.” Houston Baroque's legacy continues through recordings of past concert season programs. *See How the Father Loves Us: Songs and Sonatas of Josef Rheinberger*, featuring mezzo-soprano Katie Pollorena, celebrates the 95th Anniversary of the Casavant organ at St. Peter Catholic in Memphis, and will be released in late 2018. *Young Bach: The Complete Organ Partitas and other early works*, featuring soprano Julia Fox and the Fritts organ here at St. Philip, will be released in 2019.



Program

MUSIC OF

Johann Sebastian Bach.

1685-1750

– for CHRISTMAS –

Alla breve in D major ◆ BWV 589

Canonic Variations on the chorale *Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her* ◆ BWV 769

– for EPIPHANY –

Fantasia in C major ◆ BWV 570

Partita on the chorale *Christ, der du bist der helle Tag* ◆ BWV 766

– for HOLY WEEK –

Canzona in d minor ◆ BWV 588

Partita on the chorale *Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig* ◆ BWV 768



Please join us for a reception in the Gathering Area following the program.

FREE ICE CREAM FOR ALL!

Your presence and generosity are welcome. A freewill offering in support of the Music at St Philip Concert Series will be received at the Sanctuary exits.

Donations may be made by cash, check or credit card.



About the Paul Fritts Organ, Op. 29 (2010) ♦ St. Philip Presbyterian Church



Designed and built by Paul Fritts and Company of Tacoma, Washington, the organ was installed in the newly renovated St. Philip sanctuary in early 2010. The case appearance, in keeping with the spare nature of the church architecture, is an original design and incorporates ideas found in several revered historic organ cases. The treble flats curve inward and alternate direction in ancient Dutch fashion, and the proportions of the bass and tenor flats follow well-established trends. The carvings are contemporary creations inspired by Renaissance-era Italian organ pipe shades. Tonally the organ is more strict and at its core Northern-Germanic, strongly influenced by the work of organ builder Arp Schnitger (1648–1719). There is an abundance of reed stops, and the scope of the instrument is further broadened by the presence of a Swell with shades on three

sides, along with string stops and an Hautbois (a strict French Cavallé-Coll copy). There is also a wide variety of flute stops throughout the organ. The Fritts organ is routinely used for countless hours of practice and study each week, and serves not only St. Philip Church in worship but also the University of Houston as a teaching instrument.

Op. 29 Specifications

GREAT (manual I)

Principal	16'
Octave	8'
Rohrflöte	8'
Salicional	8'
Octave	4'
Spitzflöte	4'
Quint	2 2/3'
Octave	2'
Terz	1 3/5'
Mixture	IV–VII
Cornet (from c')	V
Trompet	16'
Trompet	8'
Trompet	4'
Baarpfeife	8'

POSITIV (manual II)

Principal	8'
Gedackt	8'
Quintadena	8'
Octave	4'
Rohrflöte	4'
Octave	2'
Larigot	1 1/3'
Sesquialtera	II
Sharff	IV–VI
Dulcian	8'

SWELL (manual III)

Principal	8'
Bourdon	8'
Viol di Gamba	8'
Voix Celeste (from c)	8'
Octave	4'
Koppelflöte	4'
Nasat	2 2/3'
Blockflöte	2'
Tierce	1 3/5'
Mixture	IV–V
Fagott	16'
Trompet	8'
Hautbois	8'

PEDAL

Principal	16'
Subbaß	16'
Octave	8'
Bourdon	8'
Octave	4'
Mixture	VI–VIII
Posaune	32'
Posaune	16'
Trompet	8'
Trompet	4'

Mechanical key action
Mechanical stop action
+ electric preset system
Tremulant (whole organ)
Wind stabilizer
Kellner temperament

Paul Fritts and Company have built nearly 50 highly regarded organs throughout the United States. Among these are instruments for the University of Puget Sound, University of Washington (three organs), Arizona State University, Stanford University, Pacific Lutheran University, Princeton Theological Seminary, Vassar College, University of Notre Dame (three organs), Eastman School of Music, Episcopal Church of the Ascension (Seattle, WA), St. Joseph Cathedral (Columbus, OH), Sacred Heart Cathedral (Rochester, NY), First Presbyterian Church (Bloomington, IN), and two organs currently under construction for the new chapel at Hillsdale College in southern Michigan.

MUSIC AT ST. PHILIP SUMMER SEASON

2018 SUMMER ORGAN CONCERTS

2:00 p.m. on the 4th Sundays of June, July and August — **FREE** (contributions welcome), plus free ice cream afterwards!

Patrick Parker • Houston, Texas



SUNDAY | JUNE 24, 2018 | 2:00 p.m.

Music of Bach — the chorale partitas

Patrick Parker is a young organist of immense musical talents. At just under 30 years old, he has already performed the complete organ works of Bach, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Reincken, playing in major venues throughout the United States and Europe, including Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, Wells Cathedral, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, and several times here at St. Philip. Dazzling playing!

Nicole Simental • Columbus, Ohio



SUNDAY | JULY 22, 2018 | 2:00 p.m.

Music of Buxtehude, Mendelssohn, Widor, Vierne and Briggs

Currently Assistant Director of Music and Principal Organist at Saint Joseph Cathedral in Columbus, Ohio, **Nicole Simental** just received her Doctor of Music degree in organ performance at Indiana University, following earlier studies at the University of Notre Dame (MSM), Wheaton College (BM), and additional undergraduate work at Oberlin Conservatory. Nicole is a brilliant player with profound musical insights.

Christopher Holman • Basel, Switzerland



SUNDAY | AUGUST 26, 2018 | 2:00 p.m. Music from the Swiss Renaissance and the American Revolution

Christopher Holman is an American organist and harpsichordist specializing in music of the 17th and 18th centuries. He has performed as a soloist throughout North America and Europe, released two recordings, been published in Oxford University's journal *Early Music*, and is the Editor of the journal *Vox Humana*. Chris is currently researching and performing throughout Europe while based at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.



Paul Fritts Organ, Op. 29 (2010) 3m/48s ♦ St. Philip Presbyterian Church ♦ 4807 San Felipe Street ♦ Houston, Texas 77056



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