

ORGAN RECITAL

Bruce Neswick

SEPTEMBER 3, 2023 • 2:00 PM

Toccata (1940)

Leo Sowerby
(1895–1968)

Prelude and Fugue in C major, BWV 547 (before 1725)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Cantilena (1951)

Richard Wayne Dirksen
(1921–2003)

Variations on *Ora Labora* (2001)
in six movements

Gerre Hancock
(1934–2012)

A free will offering will be collected to support the Cathedral music and organ programs.

Ma\$HeD (2016)

Texu Kim
(b. 1980)

Two Chorale-Preludes on *Herzlich tut mich verlangen*, from Op. 122 (1896)

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Arioso and Finale (1992)

David Hurd
(b. 1950)

Improvisation on a Submitted Theme



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About the Artist

Bruce Neswick is the Artist-in-Residence at St. James Episcopal Church, La Jolla, California, having just retired as the Canon for Music at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Portland, Oregon. Prior to coming to Oregon, he served as Associate Professor of Music in Organ and Sacred Music at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University and Assistant Organist of St. Francis in the Fields Episcopal Church, Louisville, Kentucky. Before moving to Indiana, he was the Director of Music at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, where he directed the Cathedral Choir of Girls, Boys and Adults and had oversight of the musical life of that historic Cathedral. Earlier in his career, he served as the first director of the Washington Cathedral Girl Choristers.

Active in the field of church music, Mr. Neswick holds the Fellowship degree from the Royal School of Church Music, for whom he has conducted several courses for boy and girl choristers. He has served on the faculties of and performed for several church music conferences, including Master Schola, the Mississippi Conference, the Association of Anglican Musicians, Westminster Choir College Summer Session, the Montreat and Westminster Conferences of the Presbyterian Association of Musicians, the Disciples of Christ Musicians, the Conference of Lutheran Church Musicians, the Sewanee Church Music Conference, Organ Alive! and the Evergreen Conference. In recent years, he has performed at St. Florian Abbey, in Austria, as part of the annual BrucknerFest; at the Eastman Rochester Organ Initiative conference; and at the Yale Organ Week.

Mr. Neswick has been commissioned to compose for dozens of performers and churches throughout the United States, and his organ and choral music is published by Paraclete, Augsburg-Fortress, Selah, Vivace, Hope, Plymouth and St. James presses. Mr. Neswick's skill at improvisation garnered him first prizes from the 1989 San Anselmo Organ Festival, the 1990 American Guild of Organists' national convention in Boston, and the 1992 Rochette Concours at the Conservatoire de Musique in Geneva, Switzerland.

A graduate of Pacific Lutheran University and of the Yale School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music, Mr. Neswick's teachers have included Robert Baker, David Dahl, Gerre Hancock, Margaret Irwin-Brandon and Lionel Rogg. A Fellow of the American Guild of Organists, Mr. Neswick has served the Guild in many capacities, including chapter dean, regional convention chair, regional education coordinator, member of the national nominating committee and member of the national improvisation competition committee. He was recently awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.

As a recitalist, Mr. Neswick has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe and has been a frequent performer at national and regional conventions of the American Guild of Organists. In 1994, he played the opening convocation for the national AGO convention held in Dallas, Texas, and he was a featured artist at the national AGO conventions in Seattle (2000), Washington, DC (2010) and Boston (2014). Mr. Neswick is represented by Phillip Truckenbrod Concert Artists.

Notes on the Program

Toccatà (1940)

Leo Sowerby

Sowerby was a key figure in Episcopal church music of the past century. He was, for a major part of his career, associated with St. James Cathedral, Chicago, and later served as the director of the short-lived College of Church Musicians, here at Washington National Cathedral. Sowerby composed for many media, though he is now largely remembered for his organ and choral works. His Toccata is one of his best-known organ works of moderate length. Flamboyant and open hearted, its architecture is easily discernable through the use of frequent manual changes and well-spaced use of the pedal.

Prelude and Fugue in C major, BWV 547

Johann Sebastian Bach

The Prelude and Fugue in C major is one of Bach's most popular organ works. We may never know whether the composer meant for the triple meter of the Prelude (in 9/8) and its suppliant, descending pedal peal to suggest the Magi three kneeling in adoration at the manger throne, but the fact that the thematic material bears a close resemblance to the first movement of one of his Epiphany cantatas may do much to confirm our suspicions. Regardless of its potential tone-painting, however, we cannot help but admire the internal unity and forward thrust of this remarkable work.

Richard Wayne Dirksen was one of the leading figures of his generation in American church music. He was also a towering presence here at Washington National Cathedral, having served as Assistant Organist-Choirmaster from 1942 to 1964 and then as Organist Choirmaster from 1977 to 1988. In a bold move for its time, he was also appointed as Canon Precentor of the Cathedral in 1968, the first lay person in the Anglican Communion to hold that title. Dirksen's music is forward-looking both in genre and style: he wrote for several media (some not necessarily associated with church music!) and in an eclectic language, influenced as it was by medieval modes, jazz, and even show music. His music can be said to have a flair commensurate with the grandeur of this Cathedral, a building which he knew intimately and loved with all his being. Cantilena is a quiet meditation stringing together two essential melodic ideas, one scale-like, the other arpeggiated. It is easy to imagine the piece, in all its lyrical freedom, as having been first conceived as an improvisation prior to Evensong.

Variations on *Ora Labora*

Gerre Hancock

Gerre Hancock began his career at Christ Church Cathedral, Cincinnati, where he served as Organist and Choirmaster before assuming the same position in 1971 at St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue. After retiring from St. Thomas, Dr. Hancock returned to his alma mater, University of Texas Austin, to teach and train a new generation of church musicians. "Uncle Gerre," as he was known by legions of devoted friends and students, was in constant demand as a recitalist and was considered this country's best known exponent of the art of organ improvisation. Here, he turned his attention to a favorite hymn tune by the British composer T. Tertius Noble, who was one of Hancock's predecessors at St. Thomas Church. That hymn tune, *Ora Labora*, is found in the *Hymnal 1982* at number 541, married to the Jane Laurie Borthwick text "Come, Labor On," which is often sung in Episcopal churches nationwide on this Sunday, in a sly nod to our Labor Day celebrations.

Ma\$HeD (2016)

Texu Kim

Texu Kim has been the Composer-in-Residence of the Korean Symphony Orchestra, based in his native Seoul, and is currently Assistant Professor of Composition at San Diego State University. A graduate of Indiana University (where he won the coveted Dean's Prize in Composition), Dr. Kim is also a graduate of Seoul National University. About his new work, the composer writes:

Ma\$HeD was commissioned by Mark Pacoe and St. Malachy's Church ("The Actors' Chapel") in New York City for the 2016 Paul Creston Award Celebration Concert, in memory of Margaret "Peggy" Pugh, honoring Pulitzer and Grammy award winning composer Jennifer Higdon, 2016 recipient of the Paul Creston Award. To be more faithful to the purpose of this event, I quoted Jennifer Higdon's energetic piece *Smash*, as well as Paul Creston's *Psalms XXIII* and *Now Thank We All Our God*: all three pieces were on the same program. It is my observation of the organ improvisation tradition that improvisers frequently take themes from other pieces in the same program. Bruce Neswick, who was the 2010 awardee of the Paul Creston Award and who premiered this piece, has introduced this tradition to me. I have therefore incorporated some of his improvisational style in the beginning of the piece, though everything is written down. All these ideas and influences are interwoven or "mashed up" into a 7-minute extravaganza.

Two Chorale Preludes on *Herzlich tut mich verlangen* ("My Heart Is Ever Yearning") from Eleven Chorale Preludes, Op. 122

Johannes Brahms

Brahms turned to the organ at only two points in his life. During his early student days, when he labored over all manner of contrapuntal exercises, he produced a number of organ works, of which four survive. The Eleven Chorale Preludes, on the other hand, is the creation of an accomplished composer at the end of his life. Indeed, this collection was the final composition from Brahms's pen. Why he concerned himself with the organ and the chorale prelude form at this point in his life remains a mystery. We can be certain, however, that death was in the forefront of his mind. Six of the chorale preludes (including the two played here) are associated with texts pertaining to eternal life. And, as has been often noted, these exquisite and largely introspective miniatures seem to mark with finality the end of a prolific and exuberant career. They are Brahms's musical valediction. The melody that Brahms employs in his two settings of *Herzlich tut mich verlangen* is now commonly associated with the text "O Sacred Head, Sore Wounded," in the *Hymnal 1982* at number 168.

David Hurd, eminent composer and recitalist, is the Organist and Music Director of the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, New York City, and one of the most celebrated composers in the American church today. His hymn tunes are found in the hymnals of every major denomination, and his choral and organ works are well represented in the libraries of church musicians and choirs all over North America. David's style, though learned and respectful of the traditions that form our inheritance, exhibits a populist flair. Drawing inspiration from American song and jazz, David's music, in my estimation, melds the best of the past and the present, and, in so doing, opens a path forward for church music—a path that welcomes all and re-generates our musical-liturgical culture. His Arioso and Finale, written in 1992 for the 35th anniversary of the founding of the Queens Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, is a substantial piece that begins tentatively, only hinting at the broad melody that eventually emerges. This hymn-like tune comes to animates the second half of the Arioso and provides the principal melodic material for the extroverted Finale.