

ORGAN SUPERSTAR: DAVID HIGGS

2019-20 PEDALS & PIPES ORGAN SERIES

David Higgs, organ

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| Müthel | FANTASIE IN G MAJOR |
| Dupré | VARIATIONS ON A NOËL |
| Shearing | FROM SACRED SOUNDS ON EARLY AMERICAN HYMN TUNES "There is a Happy Land" "I Love Thee, My Lord" |
| Liszt | PRELUDE AND FUGUE ON B-A-C-H |
| Intermission | |
| Albright | SWEET SIXTEENTHS, A CONCERT RAG FOR ORGAN |
| Durufié | SUITE FOR ORGAN <i>Prélude</i> <i>Sicilienne</i> <i>Toccata</i> |

Sunday, March 1, 2020 @ 3 p.m.

Segerstrom Center for the Arts
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall

This concert is generously sponsored by
Valerie and Barry Hon.

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PROGRAM NOTES

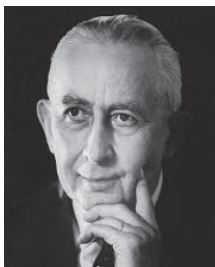
Johann Gottfried Mützel: **Fantasia in G Major**



Johann Gottfried Mützel's *Fantasien* for organ are imposing works that take full advantage of the instrument's grandeur and expressive range. But enthusiasts detect

unpredictable stylistic twists as well—an openness to whimsical detail—and at least one writer on organ music has identified a “zany quality” in Mützel's style. Could this partly result from the influence of his teacher, the great J.S. Bach, who was a fearless musical experimenter?

Marcel Dupré: **Variations on a Noël**



Variations on a Noël, one of Marcel Dupré's most popular works, showcases not only his love for the organ, but also his creative imagination (he was also noted

for his ability to improvise, a skill prized in organists). The basis of the work is a simple French Christmas song that gives rise to ten variations. Although it is also known by the French title *Variations sur un Noël*, Dupré actually composed it in the U.S., during one of the long train rides on his second U.S. tour.

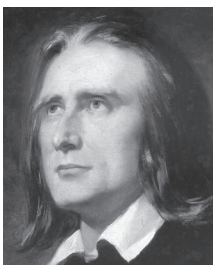
George Shearing: **“There Is a Happy Land” “I Love Thee, My Lord”**



George Shearing's musical style incorporated jazz, bebop, swing, cool jazz, and anything else that Duke Ellington might have classified as good music rather than “the other kind.”

Shearing appreciated the organ, though the concert organ (as opposed to the more compact Hammond organ) was not exactly suited to a jazz combo. In choosing hymns as subjects for stylistic elaboration, his imaginative arrangements of the familiar Scottish song “There Is a Happy Land” and the hymn “I Love Thee, My Lord” combine the classical European tradition of spinning majestic organ variations on simple themes with the American veneration of religious songs. The result is a sound all his own.

Franz Liszt: **Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H**



Liszt's *Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H* brings together these contrasting sides of Liszt—flamboyant and dazzlingly skillful on the one hand, thoughtful and respectful of

tradition on the other. Liszt composed this work in 1855, when he was in his mid-forties—certainly not old for most composers, but for a former prodigy, a time of fully mature musical statement. He revised the work in 1870, and of course arranged piano transcriptions of both versions. Its dedicatee is organist Alexander Winterberger, who performed the premiere in 1856.

The musical repertory for organ is replete with themes that spell out Bach's name in musical notation as B-flat, A, C, B-natural. This four-note motif becomes a foundation for the complex contrapuntal development of fugue form, in which succeeding voices are introduced in counterpoint and in new keys—one of history's great organists tipping his hat to another who lived more than a century earlier.

William Albright: **“Sweet Sixteenths” Concert Rag for Organ**



William Albright's “Concert Rag” is skillfully composed in the generic form for which Ragtime music is named. A rag is a structurally simple series of melodies in duple rhythms,

like marches. But the result is far from a military march; its sound is defined by the swinging syncopation we associate with Ragtime music. Even the title of “Sweet Sixteenths” puts us on notice that Albright means to make the organ dance on its toes. If you've never heard a concert organ swing, get ready.

Maurice Durufle: **Suite for Organ**



Only 14 compositions survive by Maurice Durufle, who dedicated his work to the organ and to God. His unending dedication in revising and refining reflect his

self-effacing piety.

Maurice Durufle composed the *Suite for Organ* in 1933, dedicating it to one of his composition instructors, Paul Dukas (yes, composer of “The Sorcerer's Apprentice”). In it we can hear the solemnity of Durufle's religious faith as well as the emerging elegance and translucency of French musical Impressionism—hints of Debussy and Ravel. The closing toccata glories in the organ's capabilities for virtuosic expressiveness and excitement.

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and Louisiana Philharmonic, and editor-in-chief for The Santa Fe Opera.



DAVID HIGGS

One of America's leading concert organists, David Higgs is also chair of the organ department at the Eastman School of Music. He performs extensively throughout the United States and abroad, and has inaugurated many important new instruments including St. Stephan's Cathedral, Vienna; the Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas; St. Albans Cathedral, England; St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny, Ireland; and the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola in New York City. For over 20 years he has performed annual holiday organ concerts at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco and at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. His performances with numerous ensembles have included the San Francisco Symphony, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Orpheus Ensemble, Chanticleer and the Empire Brass.

Higgs performs, teaches and adjudicates at festivals and competitions throughout the world, including the International Organ Festivals and Competitions of Bremen, Germany; the Stockholm Organspace Festival, Sweden; the Fribourg International Organ Festival, Switzerland; the Leipzig Bach Competition, Germany; the Gottfried Silbermann Competition in Freiberg, Germany; Calgary, Canada; Dublin, Ireland; Odense, Denmark; Varzi, Italy; Redlands and San Anselmo, California; and the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival. In England he has appeared several times at the Oundle International Festival and Organ Academy, the

St. Albans International Festival and Competition and the Cambridge Summer Festival; in France, at the Xavier Darasse International Competition in Toulouse; and in Japan, at several venues, most recently an all-Bach recital for the composer's birthday at Izumi Hall in Osaka. In 2018 he performed several concerts in France, including a solo recital at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris and was a guest teacher at the Paris Conservatoire. His performances for colleagues include national, regional and pedagogy conventions of the American Guild of Organists, as well as national conventions of the American Pipe Organ Builders Association, the American Institute of Organbuilders, the Westfield Center and the Organ Historical Society; and in London, the Annual Congress of the Incorporated Association of Organists and the International Congress of Organists.

A native of New York City, Higgs held his first position as a church organist at age 10; as a teenager, he performed classical music as well as rock, gospel and soul music. He earned his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees at the Manhattan School of Music, and the Performer's Certificate from the Eastman School of Music. His teachers have included Claire Coci, Peter Hurford, Russell Saunders and Frederick Swann. In New York City, he was director of music and organist at Park Avenue Christian Church, and later associate organist of the Riverside Church, where he also conducted the Riverside Choral Society. After moving to San Francisco in 1986, he became director of music and organist at St. Mark's

Episcopal Church in Berkeley, director of church music studies at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley and organist/ choir director at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco.

In addition to his significant performing career, Higgs has distinguished himself as a pedagogue. He was appointed to the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music upon graduation from that institution, and has been a member of the faculty of the Eastman School of Music since 1992. His students have won prizes in prestigious international competitions, and hold important positions in leading academic and religious institutions.

Higgs has recorded for Delos International, Pro Organo, Arsis, Loft and Gothic records.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS: VALERIE AND BARRY HON

Pacific Symphony would like to extend special thanks to Valerie and Barry Hon for their generous sponsorship of the organ series. Their dedication to Pacific Symphony as well as their love of the incredible William J. Gillespie Concert Organ is evidenced by their making possible three organ-specific performances. The Hons' generosity and love for the arts can be felt throughout the community.