

Wednesday, November 4, 2015 @ 12:00, Yokohama Minato Mirai Hall

Rodney Gehrke, Organist

PROGRAM

Prelude, Fugue and Chaconne in C major, BuxWV 137

Dieterich Buxtehude (1637 – 1707)

Variations on “Onder een Linde Groen”

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562 – 1621)

Contrapunctus I from “Die Kunst der Fuge,” BWV 1080

Prelude, Largo and Fugue in C major, BWV 545

Von Gott will ich nicht lassen, BWV 658

Trio super: Allein Gott in der Höh’ sei Ehr, BWV 664

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750)

Veni Creator: Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux

Nicolas de Grigny (1672 – 1703)

Prelude and Fugue in G Major, Opus 37, No. 2

Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809 – 1847)

Six Variations on “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”

Takeshi Kondo [近藤岳] (B 1973)



Please silence all electronic devices. • マナーモードにして頂きますようお願い致します。

Program Notes

Dieterich Buxtehude's C Major Praeludium is perhaps the most popular example of a genre of organ works Buxtehude perfected. These pieces in the "fantasy style" alternate sections of free, toccata-like figurations (including pedal solos) with strictly fugal sections. Many, like the C Major, have five sections—free, fugal, free, fugal, free—with brilliant openings and conclusions. The C Major substitutes a powerful ground-bass ciaccona for the second fugal section. The concluding toccata section is one of Buxtehude's most fabulous.

Sweelinck was called the "Father of German Organists." Numerous German city-states and churches sent their organists to Amsterdam to study with him. Sweelinck composed fine examples of organ works in numerous styles, including highly sophisticated imitative works, brilliant toccatas, echo fantasies, and chorale-based pieces. Today's work is one of numerous delightful variation sets on secular tunes, perfect for showing off the Fisk organ's many "chamber-music" registrations.

de Grigny's *Livre d'Orgue* (Organ Book), published in 1699, is one of the finest collections of French Classic organ music, with an entire mass setting—23 organ pieces to alternate with sung Gregorian chant—and five hymn variation sets. J.S. Bach thought highly enough of de Grigny's music to copy the entire book. The *Veni Creator Dialogue* is the final movement in a five-movement setting of the great Pentecost Vespers hymn. We hear the Fisk organ's brilliant French trumpets, clairons, cromorne, and cornets: in alternation with solos in the treble and bass and, at the beginning and end, all together.

One of the great works of musical art ever composed is Bach's *Art of Fugue*, compiled in the last decade of his life, preserved in two primary sources emanating from Bach himself—an early manuscript version and a posthumous print. Much controversy and confusion has accompanied the work over the centuries, mainly due to two issues: the printed form of the work is in "open score" (individual staves for each voice part), meaning the performing forces are not clearly indicated. Also, a massive *Fuga a 3 soggetti* (fugue with three subjects, none of which is the main theme of the set) was left incomplete. Scholar Davitt Moroney has published a definitive edition, asserting that the harpsichord is the ideal instrument, and he includes a compelling conclusion of the great final fugue (others have offered conclusions as well) incorporating the main subject of the collection. Today's movement, the first in the collection, while displaying Bach's characteristic didactic intensity, is also extremely beautiful and includes two unexpected, dramatic silences before the end. A final pedal point begs the question: Did Bach perhaps see the organ as the ideal instrument for the collection?

Bach composed several C Major prelude-and-fugue sets. BWV 545 went through a particularly rich development process. To the original prelude, Bach added several opening and concluding toccata measures. In another source the piece is found in B-flat Major. He also in one source added the slow movement from his fifth trio sonata (BWV 529), the version heard today in the form prelude-trio-fugue, though it is possible he intended the trio to follow the fugue. The fugue itself is a concise *alla breve* movement of great power.

Bach spent a good portion of the last decade of his life gathering earlier works into cohesive collections, usually expanding them (such as the *Mass in B Minor* and the second book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*), and improving them. From the so-called *Leipzig Collection* of organ chorales (also known as the *18 Great Chorales*), we hear "Von Gott will ich nicht lassen" and "Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr." Since we have copies of early versions of these pieces as well as Bach's improvements, we are offered an unusual peek into Bach's compositional workshop. In "Von Gott" Bach reworked the detail (notes, rhythms, harmonies) a great deal. The piece is particularly rich in its harmonic language, set in the remote key (for the time) of F Minor. The end is especially poignant and beautiful, its final chord a serene F Major. "Allein Gott" is one of two chorale settings in the collection in which Bach only uses the hint of the chorale melody to form a brilliant trio setting (similar to the fast movements of his six trio sonatas, BWV 525–530). Toward the end, Bach presents the first two phrases of the chorale melody in longer notes in the pedal to conclude the work.

Mendelssohn's most important organ works include six sonatas (originally entitled "voluntaries" as they were prepared for an English publisher) and three prelude-fugue pairs. The G Major work combines a sweetly Romantic, lilting prelude in 6/8 time with an *alla breve* fugue that works out the subject in classic fashion. Two long pedal points add great harmonic interest.

The Japanese concert organist and composer Takeshi Kondo (born 1973) teaches at Tokyo University of the Arts and is the organist of the Muza Kawasaki Symphony Hall. He studied organ with Philippe Lefebvre in Paris with funding from the Japanese government. "Variations on Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" was commissioned by Yokohama Minato Mirai Hall in 2003 and is a delightful and captivating set of variations based on the popular nursery rhyme. Each variation is purposely written to showcase the wide spectrum of colors of the 87 ranks in the hall's Fisk organ. Naki Sung Kripfgans has made a recording of this piece on the Kimball/Reuter organ at First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan, see <http://www.nakikripfgans.com>