

**Scott Dettra**, *organ*

Trinity Church in the City of Boston  
Tuesday, June 24, 2014, 10:45 a.m.

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**Prelude and Fugue in C Minor**, Op. 146

**Healey Willan**  
(1880–1968)

**Évocation II** (1996)

**Thierry Escaich**  
(b. 1965)

**Psalm-Prelude**, Set 1, Op. 32, No. 2 (1916)

Psalm 37:11: “But the meek-spirited shall possess the earth”

**Herbert Howells**  
(1892–1983)

**Passacaglia in E Minor**, Op. 40 (1939)

**Seth Bingham**  
(1882–1972)

**Prière** from **Quatre pièces pour orgue**, Op. 37 (1910)

**Joseph Jongen**  
(1873–1953)

**Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d’Alain**, Op. 7 (1942)

**Maurice Duruflé**  
(1902–1986)

*Scott Dettra is represented by Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc.  
Organ prepared by Foley-Baker, Inc..*

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### **Program Sponsors**

This program is supported in part by Chester Cooke.

## Program Notes

Born and trained in London, Healey Willan emigrated in 1913 to Canada, where he enjoyed a distinguished career as a composer and church musician, most notably at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Toronto, which he served from 1921 until his death, in 1968. His early compositional style is firmly rooted in the musical language of the late nineteenth century, and his love of Wagnerian opera is evident in his early organ works, including the Prelude and Fugue in C Minor. The prelude opens in dramatic fashion, rich with chromaticism as the rising opening theme is taken on a harmonic tour of no fewer than seven keys in just forty-nine measures. After building to a full-organ climax, the prelude ends in quiet desperation. The double fugue that follows establishes the young Willan as a contrapuntist of considerable skill. The first exposition, which derives its subject from the motif of the prelude, is worked out in strict four-voice fashion. The second subject comes crashing in with running and increasingly chromatic sixteenth notes, accompanied by an equally chromatic countersubject. Willan's contrapuntal skills shine in the third section, in which he combines the two subjects and the second exposition's countersubject. A dramatic pedal point leads to a final statement of all themes in intricate quintuple counterpoint.

Thierry Escaich teaches composition and improvisation at the Paris Conservatoire, where he himself won eight *premiers prix*. He has been organist at St-Étienne-du-Mont in Paris since 1997, having succeeded Maurice Duruflé. *Évocation II*, composed in 1996 for the Festival de Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, is built on a foundation of ostinato octave Cs in the pedal. Several melodic fragments are set in motion, including the first two phrases of Louis Bourgeois's well-known tune for Psalm 42, from the *Genevan Psalter* (1551). As if drawn by gravitational force, the fragments gradually begin to collide with one another, relentlessly building energy and volume until they climax and the pedal ostinato is broken, creating the feeling that the ground has given way. The ostinato is restored, and the intensity builds until the piece ends in a burst of light.

After studying with Herbert Brewer at Gloucester Cathedral as a teenager, Herbert Howells moved to London to study at the Royal College of Music, where his teachers included Charles Villiers Stanford, Charles Wood, and Hubert Parry. Diagnosed with Graves' disease in 1915, Howells was given six months to live, but survived after doctors treated him with radium injections, a previously untried treatment. The first set of Psalm-Preludes dates from this time and—along with the *Three Rhapsodies*, Op. 17—is counted among his most important organ works. Composed in 1916, the second Psalm-Prelude is inspired by the eleventh verse of Psalm 37: “But the meek-spirited shall possess the earth: and shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace.”

Seth Bingham was an important church musician, composer, and teacher in New York City, serving as organist of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church from 1913 to 1951, and on the faculties of Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary. He studied at Yale University with Horatio Parker, and in Paris with Vincent d'Indy, Alexandre Guilmant, and Charles-Marie Widor. Dedicated to Hugh Porter and published in 1939, Bingham's Passacaglia in E Minor is an undeservedly little-known masterpiece. The eight-measure ostinato outlines a Neapolitan chord in its second half, which makes the theme ripe for vast harmonic variation. The twenty-eight variations explore the full tonal palette and dynamic range of the organ.

Born in Liège, Belgium, Joseph Jongen exhibited great musical talent at a young age, enrolling in the Liège Conservatoire at the age of seven. His compositional style reveals the influence of his countryman César Franck, as well as his teachers Vincent d'Indy and Richard Strauss. Unlike Franck, who spent his career in Paris, Jongen returned to his native Belgium and spent most of his life in prestigious positions in Liège and Brussels. Although he composed prolifically in virtually every genre, he is best known today for his organ works, among them the *Quatre pièces*, of which *Prière* is the third. Composed in 1910, *Prière* owes something to Franck's piece of the same title, although the mood of Jongen's is more serene and optimistic. Its lyric melody, in the lush key of B major, is contrasted with whimsical passages in the parallel and relative minors.

Maurice Duruflé is considered one of the twentieth century's finest French organists and composers. His *Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain* was composed in 1942, in reaction to the untimely death of his friend and colleague Jehan Alain, who was killed in 1940 while on a mission at the outset of World War II. Duruflé derived the theme of the work by extending the musical alphabet past H (the German equivalent for B natural), so that “ALAIN” comes out as A-D-A-A-F, the principal theme of both the prelude and the fugue. He also quotes the theme of Alain's most famous organ work, *Litanies*, in the closing section of the prelude. The double fugue is one of the finest examples of contrapuntal writing in the twentieth-century organ repertoire. The entire fugue is a gradual crescendo, using the first theme in inversion and *stretto* to build tension. Finally, the crescendo reaches full organ in a thrilling blaze of D major.

As a teenager, I remember hearing Madame Duruflé perform this work here at Trinity Church on her recital for the 1990 AGO convention, and I would like to offer today's performance in her memory.

– Scott Dettra