

**Thierry Escaich, organ**

Basilica and Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (“Mission Church”), Boston  
Friday, June 27, 2014, 10:30 a.m.

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**Präludium und Fuge g-Moll, WoO 10**

**Johannes Brahms**  
(1833–1897)

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**Herzliebster Jesu, Op. 122 (posth.), No. 2**  
**Étude-Choral No. 3, “Herzliebster Jesu,”** choral de la Passion

**Johannes Brahms**  
**Thierry Escaich**  
(b. 1965)

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**In dir ist Freude, BWV 615 from Orgelbüchlein**

**Johann Sebastian Bach**  
(1685–1750)

**Étude-Choral No. 1, “Nun freuteuch, ihr Christen,”** choral de Noël (Adeste Fidelis)

**Thierry Escaich**

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**Christ ist erstanden, BWV 627 from Orgelbüchlein**  
**Étude-Choral No. 5, “Christ ist erstanden,”** choral de Pâques

**Johann Sebastian Bach**  
**Thierry Escaich**

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From **Quatrième Symphonie pour Orgue, Op. 32**  
Romance  
Final

**Louis Vierne**  
(1870–1937)

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**Tryptique Symphonique Improvisé**  
*On two submitted themes*

**Thierry Escaich**

*Thierry Escaich is represented by Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc.*  
*Organ prepared by Bob Byrd.*

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### **Program Sponsors**

This program is generously supported in full by the Florence Gould Foundation.

## Program Notes

The *Étude-Chorals*, a cycle of six works based on chorale themes, was commissioned by the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rattigen, Germany, in 2010, and will be published shortly by Schott. In this concert, three will be preceded by treatments of the same chorales by Johann Sebastian Bach or Johannes Brahms.

*Herzliebster Jesu* seizes upon the repeated-note motive that opens the chorale, transforming it into a series of chords that dart from one keyboard to another as an echo effect. A second motive, derived from the chorale's following phrase, forms a series of legato chords that move at an unstable tempo, imparting a mood of persistent anxiety.

*Nun freut euch, ihr Christen* is a luminous work, incorporating dance-like rhythms of both added and reduced note values, comments upon the Christmas text as it unfolds around the *Adeste fideles* theme. Quartal harmonies and polytonality impart a sense of vivid alertness with frequent use of double pedal.

In *Christ ist erstanden*, a broad and majestic polyphony opens in the manner of a double choir. Long descending lines intertwine in the manuals while the pedal announces a declamatory motive based upon the chorale's opening. As it develops further, an ostinato becomes the foundation for outbursts of chords resembling shafts of brilliant light.

– Thierry Escaich (trans. Ross Wood)

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Vierne completed his Fourth Symphony in August 1914, while on vacation on the Atlantic coast at La Rochelle. It was a last idyll before the onset of World War I, a conflict that claimed his son, a brother, and many former students. The symphony's dedicatee, William C. Carl, had met Vierne in Paris while a student of Alexandre Guilmant. Back in New York, Carl offered the manuscript to G. Schirmer, who accepted it for publication, with editorial additions by Carl, in 1917. From thence it came to the attention of Francis Snow, organist at Boston's Trinity Church, who gave its world premiere on November 7, 1917, at Second Church, an exuberant essay in American Colonial Revival style by architect Ralph Adams Cram, most noted for his work in Gothic Revival style. Vierne himself would travel to Boston in 1927, performing with orchestra in Jordan Hall and in recital at Trinity Church, where he greatly admired the work of Ernest M. Skinner.

French organists being as prone to purchase a score published in America as a bottle of wine from California, Vierne's Fourth languished unheard in its native land for six years. Not until 1923 did André Marchal include it in his professional concert debut at the Salle Berlioz in Paris. Performances remain uncommon, yet its final two movements easily hold their own with the best of Vierne's output. Only the Adagio of the Third Symphony rivals the Fourth's Romance for a lyricism as elegant as it is unabashed. A rare instance of cyclical unity informs the Final, in which a curiously sinuous theme from the first movement returns as a *moto perpetuo* of manic persistence. Jabbed by octave leaps and hounded by tolling unisons, the theme is finally silenced by a series of eleven hammer-blow chords. Vierne wrote to Marchal, "You have admirably understood and felt this work which, brightened for a moment by the fragments of a happy dream, finishes in a fever."

– Ross Wood