

**Christian Lane**, *organ*

The Memorial Church at Harvard University, Cambridge  
Tuesday, June 24, 2014, 7:30 & 9:00 p.m.

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*This program is to be performed without applause.*

**ON THE SKINNER ORGAN**

**Comes Autumn Time**, H. 124 (1916)

**Leo Sowerby**  
(1895–1968)

**Magnificat** from **Organbook II** (1990)

**Ned Rorem**  
(b. 1923)

**“There is a Spirit That Delights to Do No Evil”** from **A Quaker Reader** (1976)

**Prayer of St. Gregory**, Op. 62b (1946)

**Alan Hovhaness**

Chris Gekker, *trumpet*

**Introduktion und Passacaglia d-moll**, ohne Opuszahl (1899)

**Max Reger**  
(1873–1916)

**TRUMPET SOLO**

**Solstice Prelude** (2014)

**Carson Cooman**  
(b. 1982)

Chris Gekker, *trumpet*  
*First performance*

**ON THE FISK ORGAN**

**Solstice Sonata**, Op. 1013 (2013)

**Carson Cooman**

Take Flight  
The Dream of Peace  
Glittering, Aglow

Chris Gekker, *trumpet*  
*First performance, commissioned by the AGO 2014 National Convention in Boston*

**Variations sur un theme de Clément Jannequin**, JA 118

**Jehan Alain**  
(1911–1940)

**Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor**, BWV 582

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

*Christian Lane is represented by Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc.*  
*Skinner organ prepared by Foley-Baker, Inc.*  
*Fisk organ prepared by C.B. Fisk, Inc.*

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**Program Sponsors**

C.B. Fisk, Inc., *supporting sponsor*

The commissioning of Carson Cooman’s *Solstice Sonata* was generously supported by the Boston AGO Chapter Special Projects Advisory Committee.

## Program Notes

In 2007, The Memorial Church at Harvard University, under the leadership of the late Reverend Professor Peter J. Gomes, embarked on a major capital project that resulted, in 2012, in the restoration of the church to its 1932 architectural intent and the installation of two significant pipe organs. These instruments—a newly commissioned, mechanical-action organ by Harvard alumnus Charles B. Fisk’s venerable firm, and a vintage Skinner, beautifully restored by Foley-Baker, Inc.—complement the noteworthy 1958 Flentrop housed at Harvard’s Adolphus Busch Hall.

The result of this recent project is a scenario that includes two prime examples of American organ craftsmanship, each ideally suited to its specific space and housed under one roof: one mechanical-action and one electro-pneumatic, similar in size and scope yet so very different in effect and function, that serve this university’s still-vibrant church community and its recently renewed cultivation of the student organist.

This evening’s program endeavors to achieve an almost impossible task: to thoroughly showcase each of these substantive instruments within a remarkably short period of time. In works both legendary and newly composed, we encounter the full sonic scope and dimension of both organs. Each half of the program concludes with a passacaglia—first of Reger, then of Bach—offering the opportunity to efficiently explore a wide variety of tonal color through short, continuous variations. In works of Sowerby and Rorem we engage two eras of authentic American romanticism through the Skinner’s rich tonal palate; in a short work of Alain we hear the subtly crafted French Romantic sonorities that define many of Fisk’s recent instruments. Finally, this evening’s program reminds us of the long and comfortable connection between horn and pipe through a commissioned trumpet sonata of Carson Cooman and a familiar work of Hovhaness.

Born into Boston’s large Armenian community, Alan Hovhaness was raised just north of Harvard, and, beginning in 1940, subsidized his compositional aspirations by serving as organist of St. James’ Armenian Church in Watertown, two miles west. An outcast among prominent American composers of the time (his music was ridiculed by Copland and Bernstein, in particular), he sought to “create a heroic, monumental style of composition simple enough to inspire all people, completely free from fads, artificial mannerisms and false sophistications, direct, forceful, sincere, always original but never unnatural.” *Prayer of St. Gregory*, extracted from Hovhaness’s 1946 opera *Etchmiadzin* and arranged for organ by the composer, is one of his most popular works. He describes this aria as “a prayer in darkness,” its title referring to St. Gregory, who, in the fourth century, brought Christianity to Armenia.

Similar to Hovhaness, Carson Cooman (Harvard ’04) seeks to speak with a musical voice that inspires and engages without submission to frivolity and fad. About this evening’s commissioned sonata, he writes:

At the solstice (summer in the Northern Hemisphere and winter in the Southern), the sun is directly aligned with the tropical latitude lines, and the longest day of the year occurs (marking the start of summer). This sonata is music of celebration and contemplation, taking the inspiration of the longest day as a starting place for meditation both thoughtful and joyous. “Take Flight” soars and leaps with vigor—perhaps the image of a hang-glider’s journey over a dramatic landscape under the late evening sun. “The Dream of Peace” is lyrical and passionate: it is perhaps night music of reflection and intensity. “Glittering, Aglow” begins with quiet, mystical music: a gradual awakening. A vibrant, syncopated dance breaks out, is interrupted by the quiet music again, and returns to push forward to a vibrant conclusion. The new season has begun.

Indeed, while outside the long days of summer are just beginning, our program this evening nonetheless opens with Leo Sowerby’s tribute to cooler days of autumn. Composed in a single day, on October 24, 1916, and inspired by the writing of Canadian poet laureate Bliss Carman (1861–1929), this evocative piece was orchestrated by the composer the following year. Through a commanding theme and its melodic variants, *Comes Autumn Time* offers the listener a splendid tonal cornucopia, engaging the rich and vibrant colors of a Skinner organ, a sound with which Sowerby was so familiar.

THERE is something in the autumn that is native to my blood—  
Touch of manner, hint of mood;  
And my heart is like a rhyme,  
With the yellow and the purple and the crimson keeping time.  
— “A Vagabond Song”

By the time of his 1962 appointment as director of the College of Church Musicians in Washington, D.C., Sowerby’s career had long been defined by an eagerness to teach those who would make music their lives; one such student was

a fifteen-year old prodigy from Indiana. Ned Rorem, who celebrated his ninetieth birthday in 2013, studied harmony with Sowerby beginning in 1938. The first mainstream American composer to write both seriously and prolifically for the organ in the late twentieth century, Rorem's early significant work was *A Quaker Reader*. Having been raised "in Quaker silence," Rorem "craved Catholic sound." He writes:

If my religion means silence while my craft means sound, that craft (that sound) has always very consciously been devoted to banishing the noise which forms an ever vaster cloud between humdrum and mystical realities.

Maybe it's only appropriate, then, that this evening's program also includes the composer's *Magnificat*, a song more mystical than most—and certainly Catholic! In the preface to *Organbook II* (commissioned and premiered by Eileen Hunt, co-chair of this convention's New Music Committee), Rorem writes:

The timbre of all organ music, including my own, remains mysterious to me: I never know quite what to listen for. The ambiguity is at once irksome and thrilling, and will keep me forever intrigued.

May we, too, be forever thrilled and intrigued by these mystical sounds.

– Christian Lane